THE WOMEN NAPOLEON LOVED

TIGHE HOPKINS

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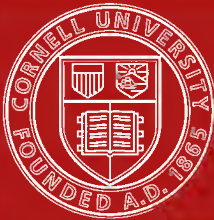

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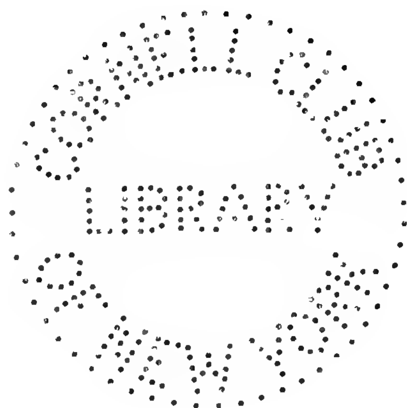

SOME BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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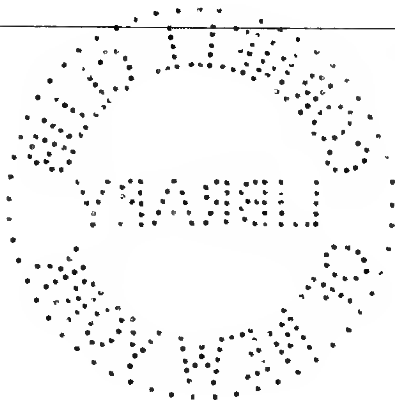

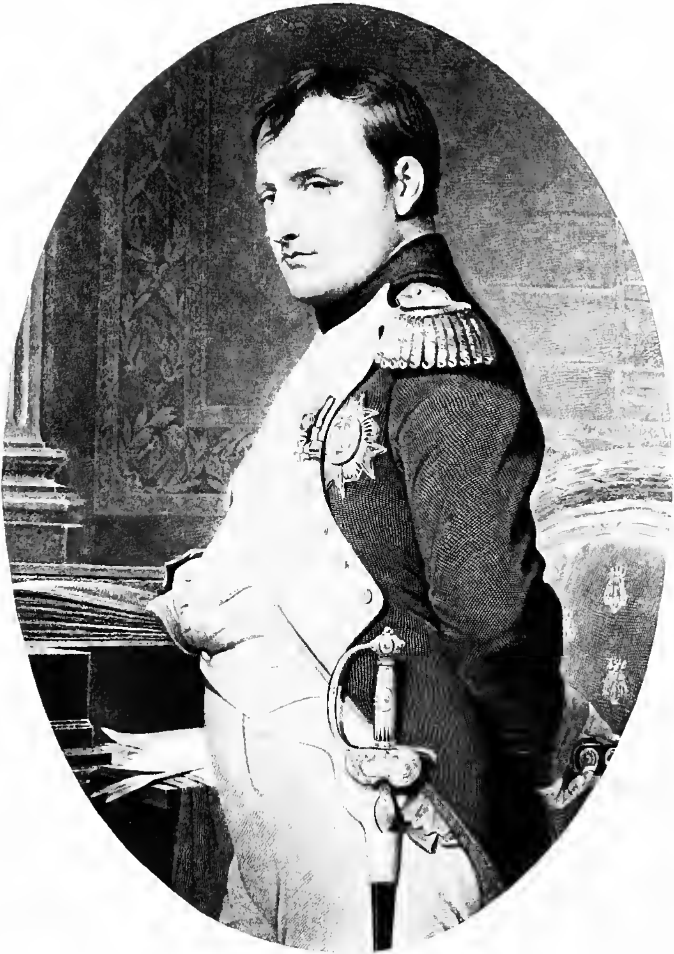

Napoleon I.

By Delaroche.

THE WOMEN NAPOLEON LOVED

BY

TIGHE HOPKINS

BOSTON
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1910

PREFATORY NOTE

THE French themselves have discussed with native candour Napoleon's experiments among the other sex. Their curiosity on the subject overflows in contemporary memoirs by many hands, and our own day has had the expression of it in M. Frédéric Masson's sober and careful essay, *Napoléon et les Femmes*, and in the lively pages—a touch less accurate—of M. Joseph Turquan's *Napoléon Amoureux*. It is a side of Napoleon's life that has not until now been dealt with by an English pen. Through the hard and crude ordeal (one of the least generous, perhaps, that convention has devised for genius) he lives not too badly.

In a very special degree my thanks are due to Mrs. C. M. Patmore,[1] who, when the book was planned but scarcely yet begun, helped me assiduously with research, and more than this, through an illness of four months' duration.

T. H.

[1] Author of *The Court of Louis XIII*

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THE WOMEN NAPOLEON LOVED

I

NAPOLEON AND THE FEMININE TANGENT

I

"Sire," said Mme. de Staël to the Emperor at an audience, "it is thought that you do not care much for women."

"Pardon me, madame," was Napoleon's curt rejoinder, "I love my wife."

The question and the answer stated facts in their degree. "What and how much, after all, have women been to me?" was, as it were, the pulpit query of the exile on the rock of St. Helena. Replies are not wanting, make what we may of them. Here, for instance, is one that reaches us through Gourgaud, at whose pen, says a very recent writer, M. Gonnard, we get Napoleon's real accent:—

"I never was *in love*, except perhaps with Josephine—*a little*. And when I first knew her I was twenty-seven years old. For Marie Louise I had a sincere affection."

What belief may we give to the sundry voices that reach us from St. Helena, the works written

or inspired by Napoleon at that spot? Upon these rests, in the main, almost the whole of that vast structure known as "the Napoleonic legend"; yet what comes to us from St. Helena has won no universal credence. Lord Acton noted, more than twenty years ago, the "disposition common in France and Germany to reject the *Memorial.*" Lord Rosebery holds that we have in the private journal or diary of Gourgaud the "one capital and superior record of life at St. Helena." Dr. G. K. Fortescue, in an admirable introduction to an admirable translation of Thibaudeau's *Bonaparte and the Consulate,* decides that it would have been "more just to the memory of Napoleon himself had the *Memorial of St. Helena* and all the other contemporary records of the petty jealousies and sordid squabbles which took place there, been left unwritten or promptly burnt." M. Gonnard, in the careful history just glanced at, *The Exile of St. Helena,* is plainly of the opinion that, though we need not swear by every fragment of the "sacred texts," we might not easily dispense with them. Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, in the brilliant final chapter of the Cambridge Modern History volume on *Napoleon,* bids us remember that, if the Napoleonic legend "owes much to the artifice of the exiles," it "has been a force in the politics of Europe." So far as the sayings attributed to Napoleon himself count in the building up of the legend—and they count, of course, for well-nigh everything—we may recall an ungallant word of that gallant worshipper, Stendhal,

that a man at the summit of power usually lies when he speaks, and with greater reason when he writes. At St. Helena Napoleon's power extended scarcely to the rabbits that troubled his garden patch; but he had a case to establish for Europe, the world, and posterity.

We may set down, more or less at hazard, a few of the sayings.

"Love is the occupation of the idle man, the distraction of the warrior, the rock of the sovereign."

"Love is merely a silly infatuation, depend upon it."

"Perfect love is ideal happiness."

"I believe love to be hurtful to society, and to the individual happiness of men. I believe, in short, that love does more harm than good."

"I have something else to think of than love. No man wins triumphs in that way who does not forfeit some palms of glory."

"I have conquered hearts as well as countries."

"In the Civil Law adultery is a portentous word; in real life it is but gallantry—an episode of a masked ball." [This in a discussion in Council of State on the Civil Code: Thibaudeau is the reporter.]

"All the women in the world would not make me lose an hour."

"Labour is my element."

It will not do to pretend that we catch in all of these sayings "Napoleon's real accent." Some of them ring true enough; in others we detect the pose

of an hour, something idle or disingenuous. What may be said with precision is that at no time was love the "occupation" of Napoleon. In the months in which he was inditing to Josephine the almost hysterical letters that will be read, he was performing prodigies with his half-trained legions in Italy. Love as the "distraction of the warrior" hits the white pretty closely in his case. At the nebulous reference to love as the "rock of the sovereign" we hesitate, doubtful of the interpretation. He can scarcely, in this instance, be thinking of gallantry, which we have seen to be his other name for adultery. "All the women in the world would not make me lose an hour," is far from being totally false, and almost as far from being totally true. Some episodes of the amour with Walewska array themselves against this catholical protest. But the last sentence in our brief imperfect list is one that we can always stand by, always rest in with assurance. Not love, but labour, was Napoleon's element.

And now for an interval let us take wider ground. All but ninety years have fallen since Napoleon died on the rock of his captivity, and more than ever deeply the world is whelmed under the flood of writing in many tongues—writing that struggles to express the minds of many men regarding Bonaparte, regarding the first Emperor of the French; writing that struggles—and for the most part ineffectually—to reduce x to terms of a and b.

Some, with Lord Rosebery, crave an apprecia-

tion, yet to be vouchsafed, of the whole being, of his character, of his deeds and their effect upon a hemisphere. But the consummate appreciation, when we get it, will not entirely flatter those readers with whom Napoleon is a cult. As far back as 1887 Lord Acton, the Daniel of a day not poor in literary judgment, was saying, in the *English Historical Review*, that "the produce of recent years . . . will not allow the mighty figure ever again to shine with excessive light." What was said in 1887 may be confidently repeated to-day. He who was "Puss-in-Boots" to little Mlle. Permon, and to her elders the giant of the seven-leagued stride, and to all incense-burners a celestial in the likeness of Jove, begins to be measurable by standards fetched not from Olympus nor from Brobdingnag. Rejecting as quite unworthy De Quincey's contemptuous epithet, that Napoleon was a "sciolist" (or shallow man) "for any age," we are still unable to pronounce him, as Charlemagne can be easily pronounced, the most accomplished man of his generation. Napoleon was not this. Long (or, at least, some appreciable period) before the cataclysm of Waterloo, his genius for war itself had begun to shrink: not fate alone disposed that day to Wellington. The admission is Napoleon's own. "At Dresden," as Lord Acton observes, "he confessed with magnanimity that the worst blunders of the Russian campaign were his own. Although he despised Masséna for his cupidity, he insisted that he possessed military talents 'devant lesquels il

faut se prosterner.' He pronounced himself equal to St. Cyr in attack, but his inferior in the science of defensive war."

Seeley even denied to Napoleon the merit of originality, but this acute and vigorous historian is an enemy avowed. None the less, the question of true and absolute originality is still in argument —and in the near future will be, perhaps, among the questions most debated. With this is linked the problem of the intrinsic value of his cardinal achievement, the reconstruction of the France from which the Revolution had extruded the Bourbons. For the present, we merely note the direct statement of Professor Pariset in his chapter on the Consulate (Cambridge Modern History: *Napoleon*), that although "it was Bonaparte who created contemporary France," "the history of France during the nineteenth century has been, in many respects, nothing but a long and toilsome reaction against the system" he established.

World-historical, in the strictest Hegelian sense, Napoleon remains: one of those men "who act instinctively as the agent of some change for which the time is ripe." But his shrine is neither of a god nor of a demi-god. It is not even, upon any rigid computation, that of the finished and flawless hero.

But it is with genius that we are dealing after all, and genius still derides our little efforts to docket and define it: we can make of genius no dictionary item. It seems reflexive, independent of the work-

ing consciousness. Could there, indeed, be held some nebular theory of that Genius Supreme which we are ever striving to glimpse behind the veil, then might we conceive of genius as one flame of the divine incandescence leaping wide into the void to become, as it were, the nucleus of a Cæsar, a Michael Angelo, a Shakespeare, a Newton, a Beethoven, or, finally, a Napoleon. For in such a nucleus we might fancy how sordid particles would get entangled, making the radiance spirtle, making it speckled with dimness; and this conception would at least spare us the futile quest of consistency.

How long were we bidden to look on the invader of England—painted in inky shades—the vulture hovering on Boulogne beach, gluttonously eyeing our shores—we ourselves, in our terror, almost ready to enter the death-agony. "Give me but four hours' lordship of the sea," cried the First Consul, "and I will conquer Britain!"

In drawing-room, tavern, and nursery Apollyon and the Beast of the Apocalypse cohered in this Corsican: Boney! England thought on him for years as, but a while earlier, she had thought on her witches—with that half-animal hatred, flecked with terror, that rises at the vision of the sorceress. Observe him as he is limned in English caricature by Gillray, Rowlandson & Co.: the Chimæra of Christendom.

Then came the turn of fortune, and after the turn of fortune the sheer, irremediable vanquishment, the surrender to England. Did our own

Government, it has been asked, live in hope that he himself would settle matters with a razor-stroke? The wretched bathos of the poisoning episode at Fontainebleau is known to us. Nausea had intervened, averting death, and the Emperor accepted the omen.

From the standpoint of a new century it has been questioned whether, for a man broken to the uttermost, banishment were necessary to the hideous solitude of the Rock. But in what degree was England to blame? Mr. Fisher, in the chapter on St. Helena, has put the facts with perfect clearness.

"On July 13 he wrote to the Prince Regent that he had terminated his political career, and that he came, like Themistocles, to seat himself at the hearth of the British nation and to claim the protection of her laws. Two days later he gave himself into the charge of Captain Maitland of the *Bellerophon.* He knew well that he could expect little mercy from the restored Government of France, and that the Prussians would shoot him like a dog. But England was the refuge of the homeless and the asylum of the exile. She had sheltered Paoli, the friend of his youth; she had sheltered the Bourbons, the rivals of his manhood. Out of magnanimity she might shelter him.

"But the man whose ambition had wrought such disasters could not expect to be treated with leniency; and the British Government determined that Napoleon was no guest, but a prisoner of war. It was a case of policy, not of precedents; and,

even if Lord Liverpool's Cabinet had been accessible to quixotic impulses, it would have been their plain duty to suppress them in the interests of European peace. The Congress of Vienna had declared Napoleon to be an outlaw, and, in virtue of a convention struck on August 2, 1815, the four great Powers agreed to regard him as their common prisoner."

Upon us devolved the "ungracious office" of the gaoler. And what of the conduct of Sir Hudson Lowe at St. Helena, the cause of such a terrible amount of acrimonious writing? Readers may make choice between the position of Lord Rosebery on this subject and that of an intelligent opponent, Mr. R. C. Seaton (*Napoleon's Captivity in Relation to Sir Hudson Lowe*), though there is, of course, a mass of other literature on this rather tedious and none too pregnant theme. "Sir Lowe" we may perhaps take leave to dismiss as a worthy and slow-witted English official person, strangely unalloyed by the Irish strain in him. Our Prison Commissioners at the Home Office would have made of Lowe the pattern governor of one of their finest convict gaols. He might not have been quite up to the standard of Louis XIV's ideal turnkey, Saint-Mars, the gentleman who had charge of the Iron Mask; but his prisoners would have known what rules meant—and what it meant to infringe them. Destiny, not over kind, pitchforked him into the most difficult and delicate of posts, at St. Helena, and for eighty and odd years he has per-

vaded literature as a type and figure of the historical scapegoat.

As for the general situation at St. Helena, the dreadful repression of captivity doubtless told upon the little band. "Exile is in itself a form of martyrdom; and the exiles of Longwood ate their bread in genuine sorrow." Their life was scarcely normal. Hysteria counts for much; the bickerings, the jealousy of one, the maudlin attentions of another to any feminine creature that came within range. From them poured forth an unexampled stream of literature; Bertrand alone, the most dignified figure of the crowd, abstaining from the quill.

A modern writer begs us not to forget the 11,000 British subjects, prisoners of war, shut up for years in France. Dr. Holland Rose, commenting on the richness of the St. Helena literature, speaks of it as showing the "advantage of a memoir-writing nation over one that is but half-articulate. For the dumb Britons not a single tear is ever shed, whereas the voluble inmates of Longwood used their pens to such effect that half the world believes them to have been bullied twice a week by Lowe."

The turn of the tide which seeks to make a demigod of Napoleon brings us up against absurdities as crude as all the defamation of the past. Then the arguments over his religion. Did he or did he not (at Weimar) launch a question as to the existence of Christ? Did he or did he not aver that Christ was more than man? He did almost certainly say: "Everything proclaims the existence of

God; it cannot be doubted." He may have refused, and did probably at heart refuse, belief in the forms of religion; belief in the existence of a God he did not refuse. Personally he would seem to have stood aloof from dogma; yet he could not be persuaded by one of the little coterie of the Rock to abjure all death-bed rites. "Who can say what he will feel in the hour of death?" returned the Emperor. Farther, he seems most fully to have recognized the necessity of religions, if only as restrictive and coercive forces on the mass of humanity. But these are vexed and disputable questions.

II

What of his personal appearance? On this point there is less of discord. First, however, does any reader remember the finest fantastical or imaginative portrait of Napoleon ever projected upon paper? It is from the pen of the worshipping Heine, and charms us in the eighth chapter of that delicious fragment, *Book le Grand.* Here in full is the passage (Leland's well-known translation):—

"But what were my feelings when I first saw with highly blest and with my own eyes *him*, Hosannah! the Emperor!

"It was exactly in the avenue of the court garden at Dusseldorf. As I pressed through the gaping crowd, thinking of the doughty deeds and battles which Monsieur le Grand had drummed into me,

my heart beat the 'general march' . . . and the Emperor with his *cortège* rode directly down the avenue. The trembling trees bowed towards him as he advanced, the sun-rays quivered, frightened, yet curiously through the green leaves, and in the blue heaven above, there swam visibly a golden star. The Emperor wore his invisible-green uniform and the little world-renowned hat. He rode a white palfrey, which stepped with such calm pride, so confidently, so nobly—had I then been Crown Prince of Prussia I would have envied that horse. The Emperor sat carelessly, almost lazily, holding with one hand his rein, and with the other good-naturedly patting the neck of the horse. It was a sunny marble hand, a mighty hand—one of the pair which bound fast the many-headed monster of anarchy, and reduced to order the war of races—and it good-naturedly patted the neck of the horse. Even the face had that hue which we find in the marble Greek and Roman busts, the traits were as nobly proportioned as in the antiques, and on that countenance was plainly written, 'Thou shalt have no gods before me!' A smile, which warmed and tranquilized every heart, flitted over the lips—and yet all knew that those lips needed but to whistle, *et la Prusse n'existait plus*—those lips needed but to whistle, and the entire clergy would have stopped their ringing and singing—those lips needed but to whistle, and the entire Holy Roman realm would have danced. It was an eye clear as heaven; it could read the hearts of men; it saw at a glance

all things at once, and as they were in this world, while we ordinary mortals see them only one by one and by their shaded hues. The brow was not so clear, the phantoms of future battles were nestling there, and there was a quiver which swept over the brow, and those were the creative thoughts, the great seven-mile-boot thoughts wherewith the spirit of the Emperor strode invisibly over the world; and I believe that every one of those thoughts would have given to a German author full material wherewith to write all the days of his life.

"The Emperor rode calmly straight through the avenue; no policeman stopped him; behind his *cortège* rode proudly, loaded with gold and ornaments, on panting horses; the trumpets pealed; near me crazy Aloysius spun round and snarled the names of his generals; not far off growled the tipsy Gumpert, and the multitude cried with a thousand voices, 'Es lebe der Kaiser!'—'Long live the Emperor!'"

Thus and thus the thrice-delightful Heine. And now we may get down out of the cloud-car, and consider more prosaically. We behold this Colossus, who stands not above five feet three or four. Was he not, to his fond cohorts, *le petit Caporal?* Thin—quite obtrusively and painfully so—in the hunger-days of his distressful youth, he wore through life that yellowish dread pallor of the secret cancerous taint that should destroy him, as it had destroyed Charles Bonaparte his father. When, as he grew in years, he gained in weight, he gained thereby also in facial form and colour.

His hair, of a dark chestnut, improved immensely in appearance after he had taken to the barber's the lank "dog's-ear" locks of current fashion. The splendid head we know, somewhat large in proportion to the body, the delight of painter and sculptor; the nose so marble-fine; the lips clenched unflinching, yet never losing their half-voluptuous curves. The eyes pale in tint were of disputed colour; hazel-grey perhaps, taking bluer tone by candlelight: they could be transfused with darker shading under emotional influences—"his eyes would look like velvet"—and betimes like hell. The "sunny marble hand" that Heine draws, the classic hand that blesses alike the tragic actor and the flirt, has "muscle of steel and bone of diamond." The nether limbs took no shame from the tight knee-breeches and the stocking; and the foot (when at last he had the money to fit it with a shoe) matched the shapely leg. On the whole, perhaps, a Cæsar in a delicate mould.

From the physical beauty of his prime—when Rome imperial does certainly for a while invest him—there is a gradual and sensible decline. By Waterloo he is getting stout. Is this Lucifer, son of the morning, the adamantine-terrible? After the great defeat he was something of a surprise to those of his conquerors who saw him then for the first time. So much flesh consorted ill with so small a form, and there was a tinge of the grotesque in the redundant outlines. The arch-Terror had come within the range of the pencil of the satirist—

the pencil of the satirist without bowels. We can forgive the satirist of the last distressing phase only by remembering that even in this last phase Napoleon's fixed idea was hatred of England and the English. There is no reason why we should quite forget the legacy of 10,000 francs to the "subaltern officer Cantillon," who did or did not attempt to assassinate Wellington.

One word may fitly here be said on Napoleon's endowment of Personal Ascendency. In what this gift of nature consists, we know not. It baffles us as the definition of genius baffles us; and we are no nearer to knowledge of it when we realize that, though there can be no personal ascendency without genius, there can be genius without personal ascendency. Whatever its essence, we may recognize the virtue in persons whose powers vary often in kind and oftener in degree, as we may miss it in some who have directed or immensely influenced the thought and movement of the world. It resides not wholly in character, for if it shines in Wesley it shines with equal intensity in Mirabeau. In Comte's *Calendar of Great Men*, a list running to some five hundred and fifty names, we have the representatives of the old and the modern civilizations, in theocracy, art, industry, philosophy, and science; but it is only here and there that an instance leaps to the front of sheer personal ascendency in man or woman. Of this enigmatic power of personal ascendency, Napoleon offers us as signal an example as the story of the world contains.

Even in the murk that settles on the closing days at St. Helena, days in which the darkened soul almost relinquishes the hope of glory in the yearning after rest—the penetrable shore of peace—something of the spark imperishable glows within the clay. On the last hours of nullity beneath the quilt, the bouts of torture, the pitiful mistreatment of erring medical attendants, the wail of poison from the people in the death-room, and the yielding of the shaken spirit amid the roar of South Atlantic breakers, what need to dwell? We have heard of these things, and shall hear of them again before the tide of the literature of Napoleon turns for the ebb.

III

We return to the point of departure: Napoleon's outlook upon woman and women. Here, marshalling the episodes of domesticity and of erotic adventure, we have employed to describe them the term tangential, for we discover no such figure as that of the intersecting circles of certain other men's relations with the opposite sex. Sarah Jennings and her lord, Nelson and his Emma have no counterpart in Napoleon's experiments in femininity. There may have lain always in the rearmost chamber of his mind some grudge against the glamour of womenkind, against himself also for any greater thrall to which for the time being he may have been

subjected from the Sex. His alleged "hatred" of women—much has been written about this—we do not in the very least believe in. This was a logical man, and at no period in his life had he any reason to hate women. If he was resolved never to be enslaved, he was ready often to be charmed. Youth and a strong joy of life ran long in those glowing veins, and a face of beauty was seldom less than a face of beauty to Napoleon.

But let us next remember that he expressed utilitarian views as to the sphere of woman.

"I hold it an absurdity that a man may not have more than one legal wife. The result is the existence of mistresses, who lead to much greater dissipation of fortune than the concubine of old. In France women are made far too much of; they should not be regarded as men's equals, for after all they are nothing but the machinery for the turning-out of children. The greatest woman is she who has the largest family" (with this last sentence Napoleon had confounded Mme. de Staël). Absolute social disorder, he declared, would result were women to emerge from the condition of dependence which—to his thinking—was their rightful position. One sex must submit to the other. Should sex-warfare arise between men and women it would, he held, be infinitely more terrible than anything the world had ever known—whether of combat between aristocrat and plebeian or even between the white races and the black. Such a situation arising, pregnancy alone would place

women at a disadvantage, for the women of the markets are to the full as robust as many young men.

In the passage just cited there is mention of mistresses. We note at once that in the catalogue of the illicit loves of Napoleon there is no "maîtresse en titre," no titular and acknowledged Queen of the Left Hand. If the Countess Walewska be excepted—and the niche that history has found for her is a very tiny one—not a single name in the roll has attained to a high celebrity of dishonour. No really great or striking figure arrests us. There is here no Diane de Poitiers, the brilliant amazonian and intellectual creature that held the heart of Henri II, whose last lance was broken in her honour: Diane, who bathed every day in cold water "filled with crushed gold," rode abroad under all skies, swayed her King's empire, and gave her Venus' form undraped to the immortalizing chisel of Goujon. There is no such pathetic heroine as poor Louise de la Vallière, the tardy, unwilling, and thrice-repentant victim of Louis XIV, who ended her brief romance in the hair shirt of the Carmelites, and whose story is one of the most poignant in history. There is no resolute and radiant courtesan like the Montespan, who crowed over La Vallière in the day of her disorder, flouted the Church, mocked at society, rode in her coach and six with ten times the pride of the legitimate Queen, and had the Black Mass rehearsed over her beautiful naked body by the hideous Abbé Guibourg.

There is no sphinx-like Maintenon, devoutest of all adventuresses, whom the scrutiny and persistent inquisitions of more than two centuries have but half revealed to us. There is no Pompadour, a great mistress if ever there were one ("the last king's mistress worthy of the name," Sainte-Beuve says), who had Voltaire for her laureate, and Quesnay, founder of the physiocrats, for her doctor; and who, when told that death had come for her, "dressed herself in her grandest, and met it bravely." There is no Du Barry, daughter of a Paris "rôtisseur," or roasting cook, a veritable Sultana of the gutter, demirep of very demirep, "with all the cynicism, animation, and refinements" of the trade she exulted in; who plied that royal dotard, Louis XV, with all her harlot's tricks, and made him smother her in gold and jewels; yet was in truth generous and warm-hearted and without malice, who said of a man caught singing ribald songs about her in the streets: "Fill him up in the kitchen, and let him sing it again." Nor, knowing what we know of Napoleon, shall we look to meet in this gallery with a Circe of the strangely-mingled qualities and powers of that Lola Montez of the 'forties—ranker's daughter and dancing-girl—who captured in an hour of delightful impudence the sexagenarian affections of Louis I of Bavaria, routed and smashed his Ultramontanes, ruled his kingdom for a year, liberalizing it from border to border—and in all these amazing months kept her royal slave at the length of the loveliest arms in Europe. For a Lola

Montez (in the capacity, at any rate, of political adviser) Napoleon would have had as little use as he found for a Mme. de Staël.

No woman's counsel would he submit to in affairs of State; Josephine on this account had snubbings to put up with. Yet he recognized the conjugal power. "A wife who shares her husband's couch must always possess a certain influence over him." But there must be nothing of potion or pill-box in the influence; the great man would decline on bonbons only. "I am used to kind, gentle, persuasive women," he once writes to Josephine; "these are the women I like." He writes from Finckenstein in 1807 (campaign against Prussia and Russia): "But let us come back to these ladies. If I had leisure for any among them, I assure you, my dear, I would have them all pretty little rosebuds."

Le Féminisme he held in horror. The *maîtresse-femme* (our mere "clever woman" is by no means the ideal rendering, but the idea is conveyed), the *esprit fort* as he knew it in the voluminous and assertive person of Mme. de Staël, did more than set his every nerve on edge: this manner of woman filled him in some sort with alarm.

We must go much beyond all this, and say with due and necessary frankness that in the amorous episodes of Napoleon we find neither touch nor hint of transcendentalism; nothing of the loftiness and exaggeration that argue a great and rooted passion. To this immense man who ransacks man, tosses

countries to and fro, and rises by distress of nations, no woman is a spiritual beacon! The lava-flow of the earlier letters to Josephine scorches even now, but this is the intensity of passion baulked of satiety by a temporary separation: the volcano is presently stilled, the molten stream cools and hardens. His love affairs were as the entangled particles: they were not of lambent flame.

Not all of the experiences are here recorded. Some among them were as little worthy of preservation as the experimental visits of a tourist to a licensed house in Paris, Vienna, Cairo, or Chicago. In the hour of triumph we see the Emperor returning to camp with the cry: "Une femme! Une femme!" The outburst was but a momentary expression of the vitality that roared up and foamed in the man's whole being: the caresses of a woman came aptly with the loosing of the tension. He sought, perhaps, no earnest qualities in the woman that he dallied with; but, as far as our searches carry us, he was neither tyrant nor debauchee among them. He sought not to reap more than he had sown in Cytherean fields.

From these imperfect strokes of introduction we may go on to the proper pages of Napoleon's *Liber Amoris*. There is no *Confessio Amantis*. Napoleon—and may Heaven be thanked!—lacked Rousseau's presumptuous weakness for that.

II

EPISODES OF YOUTH AND ADOLESCENCE

I

The Napoleon Bonaparte whom we first meet in Paris is a puny, pale, shabby little fellow in his sixteenth year. He was born the 15th of August, 1769 (some four months and a half after the child who was to become Duke of Wellington), and it was on the 19th of October, 1784, that he trudged into Paris at the heels of a Minim Friar. He had come with four or five other lads from the preparatory school of Brienne, in Champagne, to the Royal Military School. What the dissolutions of time are! In fifteen years the sallow, undersized collegian had grown into First Consul, at a salary of half-a-million francs: master of the Paris he had entered with his clothes in a small hand-bag.

One of his biographers speaks of the luxury of the young Bonaparte's surroundings in the Royal Military School, but on this point M. Lenôtre has recently enlightened us. In 1785, he says, in the first volume of his *Romances of the French Revolution*, "military cadets were lodged in a wooden dormitory, built in the middle of the first courtyard, each having a small square room, furnished with an iron bedstead with linen curtains, a wooden chair,

and a low wardrobe (in which to keep shoes and the powder-bag) on which was a pewter wash-hand basin." To the little Corsican, who at Brienne had been dubbed "the Spartan," this may have seemed luxury; but it is very like the accommodation bestowed on favoured youngsters of the same age in the first class at Borstal Prison.

Not at this period need we look for any peccadilloes on the student's part. Youths at the Royal Military would have very few chances of spying out the wickedness of the ill-lighted Paris of that day; and Bonaparte had no mind to spy. He was poor and proud, and probably a good deal isolated. Had there been football, he might and doubtless would have captained a team: he certainly would have hacked the shins of the French, for he hated them;[1] dreaming always and only of his Corsica, which the French were just about to take over. In school, he laboured at mathematics; out of school, he was a rather truculent little demon of a patriot. Woman is still summed up for him in the beautiful, devoted mother whose hand had not always caressed, and the sisters whose frocks he had torn.

He had, besides, another restraint during this

[1] He said, according to Mme. de Rémusat: "I was educated at a military school, and showed no aptitude for anything but the exact sciences. Every one said of me, 'That child will never be good for anything but geometry.' I kept aloof from my school-fellows. I had chosen a little corner in the school-grounds, where I would sit and dream at my ease, for I have always liked reverie. When my companions tried to usurp possession of this corner, I defended it with all my might."

his first year in Paris. It was the year of his father's death. The handsome, feckless, shifty man, Carlo Bonaparte, died at a convenient hour. He had, by forsaking Paoli for France, and by climbing every stair in Paris that he could get access to, wrested for Napoleon a place as King's scholar at Brienne. So far as fate went, there was nothing else for him to do: he had placed the child of destiny. Brienne led to Paris; and Paris, simmering itself slowly into the blaze of the Revolution, heralded the not too distant days of purple. Had the father lived, it passes conjecture what Napoleon would have done with him. In the post of Chamberlain in the Palace he would have found excuses to exhaust the treasury six times a year; and to have shifted him anywhere as King would have meant the creation of a new Brobdingnag. He died most opportunely.[1]

In about eleven months, which brings us to September 1785, the Corsican cadet was nominated for a commission as second lieutenant in La Fère regiment of artillery, quartered at Valence on the Rhone.

[1] It was cancer. To Gourgaud Napoleon said: "My father had always been a man of pleasure, but in his last moments he could not draw too many priests and Capuchins around him. On his deathbed he was so devout that the people in Montpellier insisted he must be a saint." Elsewhere, contrasting his mother's discipline with his father's: "Her tenderness was blended with severity; she punished and rewarded at the same time. She brought to account in us all there was of good and bad. My father, an enlightened man, but too fond of pleasure to concern himself greatly about us, attempted occasionally to excuse our faults. 'Let be,' she would say; 'it is my affair, and not yours, to look to the children.'"

In the following month, at the age of sixteen, he donned his uniform; and his first military boots, they tell us, were so much too big for him that when he strutted off to show himself to those old friends of the family, the Permons, the two little daughters, Cécile and Laure (the second of whom was to become Duchesse d'Abrantès), promptly dubbed him "Chat botté," "Puss in Boots."

He arrived at Valence in November 1785. His pay of something less than £45 a year was all he had to live on; he was eager for work, and thought much more of mastering the rudiments of his profession than of amusing himself in the garrison town. At Valence the second lieutenant did, nevertheless, learn to dance! A politely humorous letter survives in which, in 1808, the ex-dancing-master, one Dautel, fallen upon evil times, brings himself to the notice of the Emperor. "Sire,—He who taught you to take your first steps in the world commends himself to your generosity." The Emperor found a small post for the broken-down professor—as indeed he found posts of greater or less importance for so many of the persons with whom he had rubbed shoulders in his early days.

Except that he was more of a worker and decidedly more of a recluse than the rest of them, the "sombre" sub-lieutenant seems to have lived at Valence in a manner not very different from that of the subalterns of his own age. He did not, as some have said, shun the society that was open to him. Stendhal tells us—with perhaps just a little

exaggeration—that he was "immediately taken note of," and that he "pleased the ladies by the freshness and nobility of his sentiments and his audacity in argument." He pleased also at Valence one virginal and simple heart.

The pretty story is known to every one. Among the families of the neighbourhood to whom Monseigneur de Tardivon, Abbé of Saint-Ruff, had introduced the young officer, was that of Mme. Grégoire du Colombier, a kindly and pleasant lady somewhat past the prime of life. Mme. du Colombier may or may not have been, as M. Turquan suggests, "a sort of mother" to the Bonaparte of this period, but she made him free of her house, and allowed him to be on terms of friendship with her daughter Caroline.

Perhaps there was even some talk of marriage (Mme. d'Abrantès evidently thinks there was), but this is now generally denied. It is denied on Napoleon's own authority in the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène.* Whether there was talk of marriage or not, we know of nothing but a dainty and quite innocent flirtation.

Here is how the great man, on his rock in the Atlantic, recalled the little amourette. "No one could have been more innocent than we were. We used often to arrange little assignations. I remember one in particular, at daybreak, on a midsummer's morning. Will it be believed?—our sole delight on that occasion was in nibbling cherries together."

Just nineteen years later, this idyll of the cherries

had a sequel. Mademoiselle Caroline married, in 1792, M. de Bressieux, who had been a captain in the regiment of Lorraine and was a Knight of St. Louis. Probable enough is it that "the cherry-gatherer of Valence" had followed with her woman's heart the career of the war god through Europe; but what probability was there that Napoleon Imperator would remember the Caroline Colombier of Bonaparte? He did remember her.

In the camp at Boulogne, scheming his invasion of England, he received, August 1804, a letter from Mme. de Bressieux. She wrote, not for herself, but "recommending her brother to his notice."

Napoleon replied instantly, and with a gallant grace. "Your letter was a source of great pleasure to me. I have never ceased to be interested in the memory of your mother and you. I shall avail myself of the earliest opportunity of assisting your brother. I see by your letter that you are living near Lyons, and think it a little unkind that you did not come over while I was there, for it will always be a sincere pleasure to me to see you. Receive this assurance of my desire to assist you."

They met: the Emperor of the French and the wife of the retired captain, who had not seen each other since the days when, at daybreak in the orchard of Mme. du Colombier, they had brushed the dew from the cherries. Years stupendous for Napoleon had sundered them. Here was he now the "day-shining Sun" that men would stand and gape against; whilst with her, the fairy of the orchard,

fortune had wheeled in the slow and peaceful sort, and she was something matronly. The Emperor found her "furieusement changée." No matter for that. He was imperially good-natured, gracious, and kind to the Caroline his memory fondled, and insisted on appointing her lady-in-waiting to Madame Mère, his mother. Mme. de Bressieux, says the Duchess d'Abrantès, "was both witty and good; her manners were as gentle as they were pleasing." In the history of the loves of Napoleon, the name of Caroline Colombier, who enters his life but for a moment, bears a savour of peculiar sweetness.

We return to Bonaparte—for there are many tugs with fate before we greet him as Napoleon. Towards the close of 1787 we find him again in Paris, Hôtel de Cherbourg, Rue du Four-Saint-Honoré. There is at this day neither a Hôtel de Cherbourg nor a Rue du Four-Saint-Honoré; but the building, No. 33, is still upright in the street which for forty-five years has been called the Rue de Vauvilliers. Here, as M. Lenotre will tell us, in his *Vieilles Maisons, Vieux Papiers*, Bonaparte occupied a room on the third floor, quitting it only at meal times for one of the little eating-houses in the district where he lunched or dined at threepence the dish. "As though ashamed of the amount he spent, he would fold up his money in the bill, and hand it silently to the cashier." If he were remarked of any one in these shy and frowsy restaurants (hard by the quarter where he was so soon to ride abroad

as Cæsar) it was as a scarecrow man of five feet three or so, pale, with a restless, brilliant eye, whose coat hung loose about his unfilled ribs, and who. when he had dined, looked as if he were saving for a meal. There is, at the date of this second sojourn in Paris, a casual encounter with a young professional street-walker of the Palais-Royal, which is glanced at in another chapter. The episode is as trivial, as commonplace, as it well could be; but to an English reader here and there it will suggest a rather curious comparison: De Quincey's Ann of Oxford Street, another child waif among street-walkers, and Bonaparte's nameless girl of the Palais-Royal. Bonaparte, a neophyte still so far as women go, takes in hand the first neat-looking young "fille de joie" whom he meets on the pavement, questions her politely, in his cool matter-of-fact way, on her profession—and goes home with her. Widely different is De Quincey's treatment of the fragile pariah of Oxford Street, whom in a beautiful passage of the *Preliminary Confessions* he apostrophizes as "noble-minded Ann"; and with whom —himself also at that season a hungry, delicate, and homeless walker of the streets—during the nights of many weeks he had paced up and down, "or had rested with her on steps and under the shelter of porticos." But the two experiences, Bonaparte's and De Quincey's, are indeed scarcely to be brought together. To the pure-souled dreamer and idealist De Quincey, learned already in the book of human sorrows, the little outcast of

Oxford Street was a creature of infinite afflictions, to whom he, the man, though not much older than she, must play the Christ's part of brother. Bonaparte, thinking chiefly perhaps that it is full time for the King's officer to have his taste of gallantry, takes the common course—and has even afterwards sufficient interest in the reminiscence to write it out in his diary. Still, this period of Bonaparte's in Paris was in no sense whatever a dissolute one. Had he been so minded, and he was not, it would have asked some ingenuity to act the rake on a purse that restricted him to dinners at threepence the plate.

He had taken a holiday at Ajaccio, had found the family in distress (the irrepressible father "had embarked on questionable speculations, which now threatened the Bonapartes with bankruptcy"), and his anxiety on their account was redoubled. If any woman were in his mind at this date it was Caroline and no other. His care for his mother is revealed in a letter he writes her in 1788 from Auxonne, where he has rejoined his regiment. He has been ill, but makes light of it. "Work excepted, I have no resources here. I dress but once in eight days. Since my illness I have been sleeping very little; it is incredible. I go to bed at ten, and get up at four. I take but one meal in the day, at three o'clock. This I find good for my health."

He spends another furlough in Corsica; and in 1791 (a disputed date) is again with his regiment at Auxonne. This time he has with him his brother

Louis, thirteen years of age. The widowed mother, with eight children and the "questionable speculations" of Carlo, was making a fight for existence in the island home, and Bonaparte had insisted on relieving her of Louis. The pair, of whom one was to be Emperor and the other the King of Holland, lived somehow on the subaltern's exiguous pay. They had a couple of miserable rooms in barracks; Bonaparte put the pot on the fire, kept the accounts, and looked after the youngster's lessons.

Obtaining fresh leave, he returned to Corsica in October of this year, taking Louis with him, and remained until May 1792. He had now risen to the rank of captain of artillery (no great gain to his pocket), and in Corsica he was made lieutenant-colonel of the National Guard. To this period belongs a sensational but not too substantial story of an affair with a mistress unnamed. Baron Larrey alludes to it in the first volume of his work on *Madame Mère*, and it is cited by M. Turquan. According to this legend Bonaparte "gave his mother a great deal of anxiety in connection with a love-affair with a woman who had conceived a violent passion for him and who was endowed with all the jealousy of her race. Having ascertained that she had been abandoned for another mistress, she resolved on vengeance. Inviting him to dinner she mixed poison with his wine, and caused him to drink it at a draught. Later in the evening the most alarming symptoms supervened and the young officer's life was in imminent danger. His mother,

who had been immediately told of the matter, hastened to his side and prepared the remedies which the doctor had prescribed."

We have not found the story elsewhere. It is not incredible, it is not entirely probable. In the Corsica of that very turbulent epoch a dose of poison might rather easily have been employed to execute the vengeance of a jealous woman; but Bonaparte's days were just then so crowded with intrigues of far other kinds that he could have had but little time or inclination for philandering.

If Bonaparte narrowly escaped poison, did he also somewhat narrowly escape the guillotine? He had overstayed his leave, and took a prominent part in an affray at Ajaccio that has all the appearance of an attempt to capture the town. To Paris he was peremptorily summoned. Professor Seeley and M. Iung, among the historians not too favourably inclined to Bonaparte, have maintained that, had the times been normal, he would in all likelihood have been executed for insubordination. This might have happened; but the Revolution was in full blast, Paris was in a ferment, and the times were not normal in the very least.

We have merely to note the misery of his condition in Paris; disgraced, and destitute. There is mention of the pawning of his watch with one Fauvelet. He and his old schoolmate, Brienne, roamed the tumultuous and cruel streets of Paris in revolution, sat disconsolate in a dingy restaurant, and—having a few francs between them—talked of

buying up some unfinished houses and sub-letting them! Yet there wanted for Bonaparte but little more than a decade to the grandiose days of Empire.

At last, in August 1792, he was righted with the authorities, and restored to his military estate. To Corsica once more, and on this occasion the guardian of his sister Elisa, a school-girl of Saint-Cyr, one of the royal houses of education which had just been closed by decree of the Legislative Assembly. They quitted Paris on the morrow of that "wild piping of the whirlwind of the human passions,"[1] which is dreadfully memorable as the September Massacres.

No sooner, however, had the mother Letizia got all her brood about her (for the first time in fifteen years) under the ancient roof in Ajaccio, than she and they were in headlong flight from this immemorial shelter of the family. There was civil war in Corsica, and it drove the Bonapartes from the island. With the romance of this exodus we are concerned only so far forth as it brings before us the heroic figure of the mother in her trouble. She showed the high courage of any of her Roman prototypes.

"In her woman's body," declared her son, "she carried the brain of a man."

At Marseilles we see her grandly taking refuge in a garret, her three girls at her heels; with means straitened to the uttermost, sharing in the ration-

[1] Carlyle.

bread which was served out to the refugees, she kept up the courage no less than the discipline of her little household. Caroline, then about twelve, had a severe illness to add to the complication of events.

She was already a handsome girl with the delicate hands and feet of the family, and a finely-moulded bust. Her form, which was in days to come so elegant, bore yet the thickness of the hobbledehoy, but her complexion was the delicate rose of youth. And "Paulette," before whose loveliness Europe was to bow, a Medicean Venus of the nineteenth century, she already gave full evidence of her lustrous beauty. "For," says a girl friend, "those who only saw her as she returned from the West Indies (after her first marriage to Le Clere), with her complexion faded by that climate, can form no conception of her first girlish loveliness of colouring."

There in that poor lodging, in the sea-port town, lived the woman who was to be the mother of an Emperor to come; there with her daughters, one day to be queens, she sewed and knitted, and nightly knelt in prayer.

Pinched and harassed, she had need of all that thriftiness which in her days of fortune she never put aside, and which Napoleon inherited from her. "For I will gladly give a million as a gift," averred the Emperor, "but I hate above all things to see money frittered uselessly away."

We rest our gaze on her who as "Madame Mère" was to sit at the Coronation banquet of her son in

1804, with careful eyes glued on the golden service as the dishes passed before her, and with the bones of her own helping of chicken sedulously picked to the cleanest; rejecting the attempts of the palace attendants to remove her plate until her cautious parsimony had dealt with the last fragment.

II

At Marseilles the days of care, of scantiness, almost of want, dragged on. Corsica, truly, had not always given the Bonapartes the fatness of the earth; but at the old home, in the leanest season, there was garden stuff, there were eggs, and the fruit of the orchard. At Marseilles Letizia's pot-au-feu was thin, and there was no garden plot. Pauline, the radiant Princess that was to be, had broken shoes, patches to her frock (Letizia would have no raggedness), and "a hat to frighten crows."

Bonaparte gave them every sou he could out of his pay; he himself had grown used to the half-rations that had so long been his ordinary portion. He was twenty-four, and his thoughts began to dwell on marriage; as much perhaps, at this date, in the interests of the family as for his own comfort or advancement. A girl with a dowry was sorely needed at Marseilles.

Some relief, however, was at hand. In the spring of 1794, for his share in the siege of Toulon, Bonaparte was raised to the rank of general of brigade. Then, being named inspector of the fortifications

on the Mediterranean coast, he was able to place his mother and sisters in a snug country villa in the exquisite neighbourhood of Antibes.

Next it was the hap of the eldest brother, Joseph, to do the family a turn. There dwelt at Marseilles a providential soap-boiler, Clary by name, wealthy and benevolent, who had shown a practical pity for the Bonapartes in straits in the town. On Joseph Bonaparte, who also among this amazing family was presently to be fitted with a crown, the soap-boiler bestowed in marriage his elder daughter, Julie. In her lap the bride (an excellent young woman of a seemingly ferocious plainness) brought a fortune of 150,000 francs, which, on M. Masson's computation, represented a purchasing power the equivalent of ten times that sum to-day. Joseph, in brief, must have been regarded by the rest of the family as having wedded a gold-mine or a custom-house.

Bonaparte felt he could do nothing better than fall in love with the younger daughter, Eugénie-Désirée. "Lucky rascal, Joseph!" was one of his favourite exclamations for some months after Joseph's marriage. M. Turquan is of the opinion that to Bonaparte, "penniless though he then was, it was a matter of indifference whether his bride were rich or poor"; that "marriage for him was summed up in the single word 'woman.'" This opinion we are not quite prepared to acquiesce in. At the period under review, Bonaparte's solicitude for his family and their future seems to us to have equalled

(if it did not in some degree surpass) his concern for his own position and prospects; and he had witnessed the pleasure of his mother in the union of Joseph with the heiress of the golden soap-boiler. But the soap pans of M. Clary had not ceased to foam, and of their overflowing yield Eugénie-Désirée would receive her due portion. With Désirée also in the family the Bonapartes would have a double grip upon the magic boilers.[1]

The young lady was sixteen years of age, and quite pretty enough to attract the fixed and somewhat melancholy gaze of Bonaparte. Opinions about her are various. One writer hints, as to her behaviour, that it was (in full-bodied Johnsonese) "characterized by unbecoming levity." Not less censorious is Mme. d'Abrantès, who speaks freezingly of her "irresponsive, lifeless heart." We have not discovered in Désirée these ungentle qualities.

No; she unfolds to Bonaparte a heart both tender and impulsive; and we share M. Turquan's belief that she responded promptly yet with delicacy to his earliest addresses. M. Masson also, speaking of her letters, says: "There is a genuine and spontaneous tenderness in these letters of Eugénie's. After the fashion of the day, the young girl, who was known by the name of Désirée, rechristened herself for her lover's benefit, desirous that the name by which he called her should be sacred to him alone. Rough copies of the letters were discovered

[1] According to one version, M. Clary at this date was dead, and his widow the representative of the house and firm.

sixty-five years later among the papers of her who had written them, and preserved them as relics. They are conceived in the very spirit of that age, an age of reaction towards love and life, after a period when death had long been the only spectacle, the only preoccupation."

But, as to its issue, this is another of the early loves of Bonaparte that goes agley. "Amid the ranks of war," the starved-looking boyish general is the wonder of his day; in the jousts of love, with matrimony for the prize, he strikes obliquely every time. He is off the right line.

Precisely how the story ended no one may say with sureness. We are very definitely told that Désirée rejected Bonaparte. We have it, on the other hand, not less precise in detail, that Bonaparte, re-entering Paris, with expectations and ambitions amplified, suddenly or gradually swerved from her. It is to this view that we incline. If we may accept the letter, well vouched for, that Désirée writes to Bonaparte on his marriage with Josephine, our view is confirmed. The first sentence of the letter is sufficient: "You have made my life a misery, and I am yet weak enough to forgive you."

Missing a crown with Napoleon in France, Désirée won another with Bernadotte in Sweden.

III

M. Arthur Lévy[1] perceives in the Napoleon of the first phase a large and serious preoccupation of

[1] *Napoléon Intime.*

mind on the subject of women. We are moved, on the whole, to think that his preoccupation of mind on this subject was inconsiderable. "Labour is my element," he said at St. Helena; "I have never found the limit of my capacity for work." And have we not just conned one of his letters to his mother—"I have no resources but work"? Bonaparte at school, at college, and climbing painfully and eagerly in his military career, is the most strenuous creature in France. It is not, indeed, the case that there was no stuff of woman in his heart or thoughts; but it is the case that he found his best satisfaction not in pleasure but in toil. He could live with little food, little sleep—and very little dalliance. The one thing he could *not* dispense with was work, and work in prodigious quantities. Had not work been invented some years before Bonaparte's time, he would have invented it.

The young man, civil or military, who has a large preoccupation of mind on the subject of women, usually displays some wantonness in clothes. In the case of the Bonaparte of the first phase, we may not talk, with Herrick, of

"A sweet disorder in the dress,"

for he seems to have been as slovenly a dresser in his youth as was Mr. Gladstone in his maturity. He was, in truth, a great deal worse than Mr. Gladstone, who, at his untidiest, did visibly "keep clean." Bonaparte was not scrupulously washed. The Duchesse d'Abrantès, at the Paris house of whose

parents, the Permons, the young officer was a regular visitor, observes that his hands were not merely ungloved but "dirty"; that he slouched along the streets with a careless and rather clownish gait, and that his boots were as badly cared for as they were badly fitting. Another lady gave Stendhal a long description of the Bonaparte of this same period. His lank hair floated uncombed over his shoulders, his overcoat was threadbare, his whole appearance unkempt. "He was far and away the thinnest and the most curious-looking creature I had ever met," so desperately thin, in fact, "as to give one the notion that he was the victim of some wasting disease." The slovenliness seems to have been very generally remarked upon.

Now this is hardly the style in apparel of a man who has a large and serious preoccupation about women. It may be affirmed with very little hesitation that Bonaparte had not this preoccupation; though he was not at this date cynically inclined where the other sex was in question. It may be asserted, too, as we think, that the Bonaparte of the first phase was not a man especially attractive to women. He did not look the lover, he did not look the man of gallantry. He would always, we fancy, have been noticed; for, as unkempt as he might be, he could never have lacked personal distinction. Says the fair correspondent of Stendhal: "I saw at once that he was a person of genius, or at the least a person very far above the common level." But in a numerous or strange company, at any rate until

he rose into fame, Bonaparte (conscious perchance that he was not exactly the most presentable young man in Paris) must a little have resembled Hood's Eugene Aram, in his remoteness and silent melancholy. Mme. de Bourrienne, watching him as he sat alone one evening in a box high up in the theatre, remarked "a look of ferocious boredom" on his pallid countenance.

Still, if he were neither a hunter of women nor, in these days, a man hunted of them, Bonaparte —Italian, and deep imaginer, with dreadful fires slumbering behind that weary mask—had even now some spells, some mastery of charm. The abrupt, incisive tones could be softly thrilling; the falcon's eyes were now and then as velvet; and the expression which could smite and terrify could also, as one of the French biographers puts it, melt into a caress that made the receiver blessëd. Genius, at its youngest and its most uncouth, is usually genius.

The Cartwright of the seventeenth century, who has dowered British poetry with a piously flamboyant ode on the recovery of Charles II from smallpox (to quote it were to grieve the poet's ghost), might have turned some facile lines in celebration of the early loves of Bonaparte. But the lyrical note, if we do not altogether miss it in these passages, is within a touch of the imperceptible. Nothing of the pretty innocence of children's love is wanting to the scene in the orchard of Mme. du Colombier; but the Bonaparte who sheers off from Désirée Clary (if this version of the episode

is the true one) begins to open his eyes upon a world in the management of which the plain affections hold little sway.

With this period of early manhood is associated one other pleasing image or vignette. For an instant indeed we seem here to be at the opening pages of a veritable love-affair, but we turn a leaf, and the place beyond is blank. Bonaparte was with his captain of artillery, Marmont, on a brief visit to Marmont's father at Châtillon-sur-Seine. Junot, one of Bonaparte's aide-de-camps (who was to marry Laure Permon, conquer Portugal, receive the title of Duc d'Abrantès, and die insane), was of the party; and both he and Marmont had praised their young general to the skies. The seedy-looking general of the Republic did not, however, impress himself too favourably on the county magnates; and he for his part was not less taciturn than usual. The visit might have turned out poorly but for Mlle. Victorine Chastenay.

Bonaparte had been taken by his hosts to be presented to the de Chastenay family. Mlle. Victorine treated the company to an Italian ballad, and timidly inquired of Bonaparte if her pronunciation were correct. He with unsocial brevity assured her it was not. The start was unpromising; but on the following evening, when the de Chastenays dined at the de Marmonts, Bonaparte made amends. Mlle. Victorine, her curiosity piqued by the long-haired, monosyllabic, military person with the devouring eyes, approached him

deliberately and insisted on his talking to her. She drew him out on Corsica and, fortunately for her, Bonaparte at this date would discourse Corsica "from morn till noon, from noon till dewy eve." It was not from want of words that he was ever mute, and ideas rose naturally and with rapidity in his mind. Mlle. Victorine was astonished, electrified, enchanted. They met again, and on one occasion at least went flower-gathering in the fields —though not at daybreak. Mlle. Victorine was perhaps more heedful than Mlle. Caroline. At this point alarming news (that his command had been taken from him) reached Bonaparte, and he must hasten from Arcady to Paris. His idyllic interludes were destined to discouragement.

Bonaparte returned no more to Châtillon-sur-Seine. Later, amid the radiant days of the Consulate, Mlle. de Chastenay was once a visitor at the Luxembourg. She had a favour to solicit in the interests of an *émigré*, and for some reason she elected to ask it not of the First Consul himself but of Josephine. Josephine had heard of the young lady, and from the lips of her husband, who had forgotten neither the summer holiday nor its genius. While the suit was being explained he entered the room, and at once began a cordial conversation. Josephine, as we are informed, betrayed not only nervousness but even some degree of agitation. What was her mind working on? Bonaparte at one period of his married life, tiring of an amour, would sometimes make a jest of it to

Josephine, and wheedle or bribe her into helping him to send the lady packing. But with this interesting young noblewoman there was not and there had not been the very suspicion of a liaison. It must have been that Josephine suspected or imagined the possibility of one. Bonaparte gave Mlle. de Chastenay a general invitation to spend an evening with them at the Luxembourg, and Josephine promised to procure her a formal interview for the presentation of her petition. She, who so seldom forgot a promise, seems carefully to have forgotten this one, and Mlle. de Chastenay did not pass an evening at the Luxembourg.

Of the sparse idylls of Bonaparte, this is the last recorded.

IV

Whom have we next?

With the next lady we return to the matrimonial schemes of Bonaparte, which were growing insistent. In an hour of illusion, pathetically droll, he cast himself at the feet of Mme. Permon. This estimable lady, mother of a family, was Corsican by birth; she had known the Bonapartes at Ajaccio, and was on very kindly terms with Letizia. It was in the house of the Permons at Montpellier in Languedoc that Carlo Bonaparte, the father, had died; and at their house in Paris Napoleon Bonaparte was an intimate. To Mme. Permon he made an audacious offer of marriage.

In her spirited way the Duchesse d'Abrantès (the little Laure Permon of the days in question) narrates the story in the first volume of those rather romantic but entirely delightful *Memoirs.* Mme. Permon was not only a widow but in weeds. Etiquette imposed on her a rigorous seclusion from society, but her health had suffered, and the family doctor prescribed a course of mild distraction. Mme. Permon must take a private box, hide herself at the back of it, and watch the play discreetly every evening. This counsel the widow adopted, and with a guard of her friends went nightly to the theatre, Bonaparte being usually of the party. The drama proved a capital tonic, and Mme. Permon's wasting spirits were refreshed. For Bonaparte was it reserved still farther to exhilarate them.

He called one morning on the lady with a proposal to unite the two families by no fewer than three marriages. Pauline Bonaparte, praised even then as "la jolie Paulette," should marry Mme. Permon's son. This young man, as we meet him in the fervent pages of his sister's *Memoirs*, was a paragon of twenty-five, who painted as well as Vernet, played the harp better than Kromphultz, spoke English, Italian, and modern Greek, made verses "like an angel," worked like a horse, had a talent unsurpassed for the conduct of affairs, and stood five feet nine in his boots.

In the second place, Mme. Permon's daughter Laure should be given in marriage to Louis or Jerome Bonaparte.

"My dear friend," smiled the widow, "you are a perfect High Priest this morning. You are for marrying every one, children and all!"

But Bonaparte had not finished. Bending over the plump white hand of the widow, he gravely assured her that he had that morning resolved to entreat her to begin the union of the Bonapartes with the Permons by accompanying him to the nearest altar.

For a period of seconds she regarded her suitor with an astonishment which, says Mme. d'Abrantès, "tenait de la stupéfaction," and then—shook with laughter. Bonaparte looked graver than before. Mme. Permon made an effort to recover herself. "My dear Napoleon," said she in haste, "pray don't think that I am laughing at you; I am laughing at myself for the ridiculous rôle you are assigning me. Perhaps you think that you know my age? Well, you don't, and I am not going to tell it to you. What I *will* tell you is that I am old enough to be your mother, and not only yours but Joseph's to boot. And now let us bring this afflicting joke to an end."

Bonaparte continued to beseech her, declaring that never had he spoken more seriously. But if he was importunate the widow Permon was obdurate. Her refusal was as definite as refusal could be, nor was she ever again persuaded to bestow another thought upon the matter. A good-natured, sensible, matronly woman of the world, who shall say or think that she had not acted wisely?

If in the foregoing there is some smack of comedy, the story that succeeds it treads very close to farce. This mellow siren, Montansier! Actress, manageress, adventuress and woman of pleasure, sedate history knows nothing of La Montansier; but, commonplace as she is to the hard core of her, her career, extending through nine-tenths of a century, discloses France or Paris to us under five separate aspects. She is, as far as French annals go, the old world and the new. With an energy flaming, beaming, and indestructible she goes through the greater part of the long reign of Louis XV, through the reign of Louis XVI, the Revolution, the seven years of the Republic, the years of the Consulate and the Empire, the wreck of Waterloo, and the first years of the reign of Louis XVIII.

Strange that Carlyle, who makes so brave a figure of Théroigne de Méricourt, never once glimpsed Montansier in the Revolution; we miss thereby one brief chapter of his *History* that would have been, in Meredith's phrase, "a cataract of laughter"! When, during or after the September Massacres, her Paris establishments were closed, she gathered her company about her, from the actors to the scene-shifters, and marched them through the streets to the Assembly in congress at the Riding School. Her lover and chief performer, Neuville, harangued the Assembly in a written speech, in which he stated that the Demoiselle Montansier, manageress, begged that her whole company might

be allowed to join the army of the Republic as volunteers for the defence of the nation. A few days later they marched out amid the cheers of Paris. In the neighbourhood of Rheims they "played a farce between two battles"; and Neuville, reviewing his company for the benefit of the townspeople, was pitched from an unfamiliar saddle clean over his charger's head. The organizer of this Thespian corps for the relief of France was an elderly actress, who, if we could accept an unacceptable chronicle, might have been Empress of the French. But no, emphatically no!

Who Montansier was no one seems positively to know. She herself would have had it believed that her father was an advocate. The Vicomte de Reiset, in a very recent volume, *Belles du Vieux Temps*, says that he held "un petit emploi dans la marine." M. Lenôtre, in his *Vieilles Maisons, Vieux Papiers*, brings documentary evidence to show that he was a pin-maker at Bayonne, where, undoubtedly, in December 1730, the heroine was born. She escaped from a convent school at Bordeaux, joined a troupe of strollers, sailed with them to America, and after some years returned to France.

During the old *régime* Montansier (whose domestic name, if M. Lenôtre is correct, was Brunet) seems first to have achieved notoriety as a woman of the town, visited by such gallants as the young Duc de la Trémoïlle, the Marquis de Jonsac, the Comte d'Esparbès, "and many others." At no

period was she really distinguished as an actress, but in some comic piece that she played in at a little theatre in Versailles, her broad southern accent tickled the fancy of Marie Antoinette, who, it is said, shared a bowl of soup with her behind the scenes. The young Queen, in those days before the Terror, had high spirits, and could enjoy a romp, and was fond of flouting etiquette.

Then Montansier began to be famous. The play-house in the Rue de Satory at Versailles she had opened by special leave; and Court favour, won by characteristic effort on her part, procured for her somehow "the management of all the theatres in the three districts of Rouen, Alençon, and Caen." Through Marie Antoinette, according to M. Lenôtre, "she obtained the exclusive privilege of managing all the theatrical entertainments, balls, and fêtes of Versailles. She took advantage of this to construct at the end of the château, opposite the prettiest part of the park, the grand theatre which still exists." In no long time, if faith may be placed in sundry chroniclers of the period, Mlle. Montansier was in some sort manager-general of the French theatrical world. The female Frohman of her day seems altogether too small a title for this all-conquering woman who moved and had her being in an orbit almost Napoleonic.

But Montansier was always for Montansier; a keen, self-centred, calculating lady, with splendid eyes, tip-tilted nose, and universal smile, whose motto was: "The winning side for me." An in-

vincible royalist under royalty, the Revolution found her very democrat of very democrat.

Out of her profits reaped in Normandy and Versailles she bought and rebuilt the Palais Royal marionette-show, called the Beaujolais. Here she had both a theatre and a "salon"! Common Paris crowded to the theatre, and in the salon were seen of an evening a "fantastic pell-mell of all sorts and conditions of men," from "Egalité" Orléans and the Duc de Lauzun to Danton, Robespierre and Barras. After the play there was a very free-and-easy supper; and "at one end of the torn and faded old sofa sat the mistress of the establishment arranging with her stage-manager, Verteuil, the programme for the week; while at the other end the player Grammont planned with Hébert the riots that should take place the next day at the Cordeliers."

On her re-entry into the capital, after the excursion with her volunteers to Rheims, in the very midst of this disastrous epoch when men and women trembled for their heads, the undefeated and irrepressible Montansier, now well toward in years, built in the Rue de Richelieu the biggest and grandest play-house ever seen, the Théâtre National. When the Terror was at its height she planned an opening in Montansieresque style. Down on her at this moment came the Commune of Paris, with an order for the confiscation of the building. But what to do with the manageress, who was not in the habit of playing the bystander

when property of hers was in danger? Up rose Chaumette in the Convention, and accused Montansier of having erected a theatre for the express purpose of setting fire to the National Library! The denunciation was good enough, and to the prison of La Force she went. Here, however, the undaunted woman made so terrific a to-do that the Commune was fairly afraid of guillotining her; and Thermidor set her at liberty. She claimed from the Convention seven million francs in compensation. "Pooh!" said Bourdon de l'Oise, "we could build a fleet for that."

Montansier returned to her quarters in the Palais Royal. A part of these, as the story runs, she shared with Barras; and, says M. Lenôtre, "it casts an instructive light on the manners of the Revolution, when we find the most influential man in the Government living in the house of an actress."

To Bonaparte at this period the "most influential man" rendered a variety of services; and Barras himself it is who tells us that he brought together the ill-dressed, cadaverous soldier of fortune and the now rather ancient charmer of Paris, and arranged a match between them. What a spectacle were it to have seen Napoleon, a few years later, crowning the Empress Montansier at the altar of Notre Dame! Barras dwells with infinite gusto on the fictitious history of their "engagement."

"I betrothed the future spouses that very day," he says, "and they both agreed with equal willingness. I thought I must have exploded with

laughter, but was compelled to keep serious. At table, I placed Mlle. Montansier beside me, telling Bonaparte to take a seat opposite. Throughout dinner they sat with their eyes fixed on one another," etc., etc.

Page after page of this stuff does Barras regale us with, and all of it is dull and futile fiction. The history is unsupportable by any testimony save the word of Barras; and this, whenever Bonaparte is concerned, is generally worse than worthless. He would, when Bonaparte was in power, fabricate any lie to injure him; but of Barras's efforts and achievements in mendacity this may be stamped as the silliest. Bonaparte made no proposal of marriage to Mlle. Montansier. If Mme. Permon were old enough to be his mother, this Circe might have been his grandmother. "She could not have been less than seventy," says Barras. This was a final touch of malice; but, to be exact, the lady was turning sixty-five. A most wonderful woman, none the less, and she lived to be ninety; bequeathing "all her creditors to the King of France," who was then Louis XVIII.

Has any reader of this generation ever chanced upon Mrs. or Lady Elliott's[1] *Journal of My Life during the French Revolution?* It is, if not of the

[1] Grace Dalrymple. When a mere girl she was married to Sir John Elliott, a man older than her father, and by him was shortly afterwards divorced. She bore a daughter to the young Prince of Wales, and it is said to have been "at the express desire" of George III that the *Journal* was composed.

highest interest, extremely well worth reading. The lady's anonymous editor informs us that she had received an offer of marriage from Bonaparte, "which, however, she rejected." But for the curiously abrupt termination of the *Journal*, which seems to have been hurriedly set down one day and never resumed, we might have had from the author herself a statement on this important point. Perhaps his Majesty, who read the work piecemeal, as the successive sheets were carried to him by Dr. Dundas, forgot to send it back. It remains that we do not really know whether Bonaparte proposed marriage to the most beautiful and fascinating young English lady in the Paris of his adolescence.

III

JOSEPHINE

I

THERE are domestic legends, as there is a political legend, of Napoleon Bonaparte. The political legend relates chiefly to the career of the Emperor, and to the objects, real and professed, of that career. The domestic legends belong for the most part to the various phases of the young, struggling, rising, and ambitious Bonaparte. To many readers, one among these legends is doubtless quite familiar. It describes the romantic first encounter and interview of Bonaparte and Josephine. Scarcely one of the biographers omits it.

After Vendémiaire (October 5, 1795), Bonaparte, transformed into general-in-chief of the army of the interior, was in command at Paris. The disarmament of the sections had been carried out. The widow Josephine had preserved the sword of her husband, Alexandre de Beauharnais, and resisted the demand of the agents for its delivery. Another version of the story says that the weapon had been given up, and that Josephine sent her son Eugène to beg it back from the general-in-chief. Bonaparte, charmed by the lad's address, and touched by his appeal, at once acceded to it;

Josephine

From a Miniature by Isaby.

and Josephine hastened to the bureau with her compliments and thanks. The gallant young general, smitten at sight, made equal haste to return the visit—and fell in love.

This is the legend. There would be no great harm in accepting it, but the pretty tale has been invalidated. It is denied in the main by Barras, but that is unimportant. It is affirmed in the main in the *Memorial of St. Helena*, but that celebrated document, on which so much has been founded, is not pure gospel. What seems incontestable is, that Bonaparte and Josephine were acquainted before the date of the disarmament of the Paris sections. Had they not met in the salons of the Directory, where the graceful, elegant, and captivating widow was in some degree a celebrity, and where Bonaparte, at one time the shabbiest and least observed among the guests, was, a little later, received and most intently scrutinized as the hero of Vendémiaire, the hope of the Republic whose fortunes he was held to have restored?

In Ouvrard's *Memoirs* we have a glimpse of Bonaparte, "shortly before the 13th Vendémiaire," in the drawing-room of that conspicuous beauty, Mme. Tallien, "Our Lady of Thermidor." Ouvrard says that the Bonaparte of this period was the least noticeable and the least regarded by fortune of all the persons who composed Mme. Tallien's salon. Sitting aloof, as a rule, from the knots of gossipers, he would on rare occasions join them, jesting then with the merriest. In one of

these moods he pretended to be a fortune-teller, and taking the hostess's hand, "débita mille folies." Among the ladies of the circle on this evening was Mme. de Beauharnais, languorous and nonchalant in her light-flowing draperies. What destiny the fortune-teller read in the plump palm of Mme. Tallien, we know not. The company would have thought but poorly of his powers had he turned from her to Josephine with the remark: "And you, madame, in nine years or so, will be seated on the throne with me as Empress."

It was not until the 26th of October, 1795, that Bonaparte was definitively named general-in-chief of the army of the interior, and installed at the quartier général of the Rue des Capucines. But we have a letter to him from Josephine, dated October 28, which, if not precisely a love-epistle, is little like the formal note of a mere acquaintance. In this, indeed, the lady complains, with scarcely a pretence of reserve, that Bonaparte no longer visits one who is "tenderly attached" to him, and ends with a "Bonsoir, mon ami; je vous embrasse." Clearly, their relations were not of the day before.

Bonaparte, waiting upon fate, distracted with anxiety for his own future and that of his family, had taken his part now and then in the very lively society of the day, less for the amusement it offered than for the chance of finding there some patron who would help him to a profitable place. Of this society Josephine de Beauharnais—at one fashionable house to-night, at another to-morrow—was an

assiduous frequenter; and Josephine also, with two growing children, and no income to speak of, had her future to make. The pair of fortune-hunters had found themselves together at Mme. Tallien's, at Barras's, and elsewhere. At what place, on what particular evening, they first exchanged a word, it is idle to inquire. We do not know by whom they were introduced. Perhaps no one introduced them; introductions could be dispensed with at those curiously mixed reunions of the Directory. But the poetic legend of "the sword of my father" is most probably a fairy-tale. It seems not to have been known at this period to the friends either of the lady or of the youthful general himself; and is perhaps to be classed with the other and more famous legend of the prediction to Josephine that she would one day wear a crown.

What is here to the purpose is that Bonaparte was very soon and utterly in bonds of love to Josephine; and it has now to be shown that if the Bonaparte of these days was in sore want of a patron or protector, not less sore was Josephine's want of a man to make good her very dubious future.

II

The Josephine of our earliest knowledge is a rather gawky and long-legged girl running wild with little niggers on a sugar plantation of the West Indies. She was through and through a Creole;

the Creole offspring of Creole parents. Her father, Joseph-Gaspard Tascher de la Pagerie, was the son of an emigrant, Gaspard-Joseph, who had quitted France for the West Indies in 1726. The family belonged to the small provincial nobility of the Orléanais district. Josephine, the eldest child of her parents, was born at Trois-Islets, Martinique, in 1763, a few months after the signing of the Treaty of Paris which ended the Seven Years' War. Her early years were passed in the sugar-refinery which was the only building left standing on the Tascher estate after the hurricane of 1766; and at the age of sixteen she sailed with her father for France to be married to Alexandre de Beauharnais.

The match had been adroitly arranged by Josephine's strong-minded and not over-scrupulous aunt, Mme. Renaudin, who was living as the mistress of Alexandre's father. This gentleman, the Marquis de Beauharnais, had held the appointment of Governor and Lieutenant-General of the Antilles, a command in which he was undistinguished. Relieved of it, he returned to France; and with the family went Mme. Renaudin, who, during the sojourn of the Beauharnais in the West Indies, had obtained a situation as companion to the Governor's wife.

The marriage in 1779 of Josephine and Alexandre, coldly contrived on the part of Aunt Renaudin (who had long thrown over her own husband), turned out a most unblest affair. Beauharnais the younger, an odious compound of liber-

tine and prig, was but two years ahead of the schoolgirl from Martinique on whom he tried the airs of a dominie. Josephine was for no dominie. A little later she might have won him by the wiles that Paris talked of, but these were still untried. She knew scarcely more of life than the slave children she had romped with in Martinique; and for the conquest of a husband (Vicomte to boot) who was at least in touch with the elegance of Paris, she lacked all but the slender accomplishments of a West Indian convent. Josephine's best gift from nature was a figure of surpassing grace; and, for all her Creole origin, her figure at the era of her marriage had barely touched the stage of spring. She had never any smack of native wit; the arts defensive and offensive were equally and entirely unknown to her; and her one consummate power, the power of pleasing, seems not to have developed till she felt the hard need of using it. A wife of sixteen, she was neglected and brutally victimized by a hidebound and pedantic rake of a husband two years her senior.

Within a few months of their marriage Alexandre had practically deserted her. He had entered the army as a lad, and early in 1780 he rejoined his regiment. On September 3rd of this year, Josephine gave birth to Eugène, who was to be Viceroy of Italy. Alexandre, who had returned for this event, left France again immediately afterwards for Italy, where he remained until July 1782. In France once more, he drifted between Paris and

Verdun, bestowed a week or more of his tediousness upon Josephine, and at the end of two months sailed for Martinique. Wedded life was as good as over. In Martinique he picked up a new mistress (his habit under every sky), who, feigning an intimate and infinite knowledge of the Taschers, crammed him with horrid tales of Josephine. To Josephine, a girl-wife not yet twenty years of age, against whom he had nothing to produce but the slanders of a woman of ill-fame, his mistress, Alexandre wrote a letter of superlative malignity. He called her "the vilest of creatures"; renounced and cast her off. At about the time that the husband was sharpening his pen for this effort, the wife was bringing into the world (April 10, 1783) a daughter, Hortense, who was to be Queen of Holland and mother of Napoleon III. Alexandre returned to France and Paris, Josephine took refuge in a convent. This was in the autumn of 1783. They had been man and wife not quite four years, and had dwelt together in all some nine or ten months. The husband's family were wholly with Josephine. Alexandre set on foot proceedings for a separation; Josephine, handsomely backed by Aunt Renaudin, did the same. Alexandre, manifestly, had no case, and he it was who had finally to yield. In a lawyer's office, on March 3, 1785, he retracted everything, and agreed to a separation, the conditions of which were entirely to Josephine's advantage. It was one of the few satisfactory days of her married life.

Three years later, in 1788, Mme. la Vicomtesse made a voyage to Martinique. She may have tripped in some love-affair (though of this there is no evidence); she may have been in the toils of the money-lenders; she may simply have thought it would be nice to be called "my Lady" by the dusky playfellows of her childhood. All we know is that she went for two years to the West Indian home. Before she sailed on her return to France the Revolution had burst.

Of the new, anarchic order in France, Alexandre was making the most; and after the death of Mirabeau, in April 1791, he was no less a character than President of the Assembly. That Assembly towered for a while above France, and ceased. Alexandre received orders to betake himself again to his regiment; and in 1793, we behold him Commander-in-chief of the Army of the Rhine—an inexplicable promotion. From this altitude his fall was swift. For all the fluent liberalism of his talk, Alexandre was an aristocrat, and every aristocrat had enemies by the score. Failing to relieve Mayence, he resigned his command, and was presently under arrest in the prison of Les Carmes. This, the dreadfully transformed abode of the energetic Carmelites, was one of the emergency prisons of the Revolution. Paris abounded in temporary gaols, from palaces to convents, and all of them were packed full. The Reign of Terror had set in.

Josephine herself was now in danger; so also

were her children. Hortense she apprenticed to a dressmaker, Eugène to a carpenter. Although there had been no reconciliation between husband and wife, Josephine did undoubtedly exert herself for Alexandre; but in six weeks or so she followed him to prison. The suspects in these places were not isolated; and, with death confronting or threatening both of them, Josephine made her peace with the man who had so grossly used her. In July 1794 Alexandre died under the guillotine.

Josephine looked for the same fate, and it came very near to her. She was, it is said, expecting her summons one night. All who lay in the revolutionary prisons knew what that meant. It meant removal to the Conciergerie, and the journey thence by tumbril to the scaffold. In what is now the vestibule or entrance to the Buvette du Palais, a little restaurant for lawyers frequenting the Palais de Justice, the victims of the day met to take their places in the death-cart. Clients hang up their hats within a yard or two of the spot where Samson's assistants performed the "toilet" of the condemned. Samson himself, in his long-skirted brown surtout, went every morning, as a tradesman on his rounds, to the Public Accuser for "orders." The Public Accuser could usually tell, before judgment had been delivered, what the tale would be for the day: so many victims, so many tumbrils, at twenty francs the tumbril.

But the tide of blood on a sudden fell. It fell with the head of the elder Robespierre on the 9th

Thermidor (July 28, 1794). A tradition runs that on the 10th Thermidor Josephine was to have been brought before the Tribunal, but that she had fallen ill and was in the hands of a Polish physician at the Carmes. It was less her own malady than the death of Robespierre that saved her. She was released on the 6th of August, 1794, after having spent in prison rather more than one hundred days.

Josephine was a widow, she had two children, and she must have been almost penniless. She was thirty-one years of age, and a Creole in the seventh lustrum is clean past her youth. Pleasure she may meet, youth she will meet no more. This, in the autumn of 1794, was the Vicomtesse de Beauharnais's situation in Paris.

For charms of person and of manner, however, the widow of thirty-one carried it over the bride of sixteen. It is whispered that in prison itself, in the very shadow of the guillotine, some captives of note had sighed for her—and certain it is that love did very strangely flame in the prisons of the Terror. Briefly, Josephine at thirty-one, with her soft auburn hair, her southern pallor that was more beautiful than colour, her tender grace and suppleness of form—

"Straight, but as lissom as a hazel wand,"

was a woman rarely planned to fascinate. And from the "very border of destruction" her feet were once again upon the slopes of life. That for the moment was the thing.

From the black and fetid Carmes she was launched upon a Paris intoxicated with a new sense of liberty. To the Reign of Terror succeeded the reign of woman, woman emancipated anew, and resolved—as the French say—to fling her bonnet over the mill. "She became the wanton sovereign of a panting, fevered, restless, tossing kingdom, a fair-green where appetite and vile passions, petty gains, sordid amours, and every merchandise from which good feeling shrinks, were exposed for sale and barter." Marriage, according to Cambacérès, was nothing but "the action of nature," and the civil compact was dissolved at the pleasure of either party. The De Goncourts point to the woman of the period passing "from one husband to another, unbinding and refastening her girdle" as the fancy seized her. "They marry and divorce, destroy marriage to marry again, without a touch of retrospective jealousy on the man's side, of modesty on the woman's; and the unions of those days would appear to have been fashioned after the practice at a horse-breeder's, where first one mate and then another is tried."

In salons, in public gardens, at every street corner, all Paris danced madly, frantically. It was less Carnival than Saturnalia, for everything, or almost everything, was permitted. There were balls in graveyards, the dancers whirling in and out among the gravestones. Stranger than these were the "Bals des Victimes," which represented for a time the highest efforts of fashion gone crazy. To

a "Bal des Victimes" none were admitted who could not prove the loss of a relative on the scaffold. Guests arriving at this ball, says Octave Uzanne, "bowed à la victime, with a sharp jerk of the head, imitating the movement of the condemned when the executioner lays him on the plank and pushes his head through the lunette. Much studied grace was given to this mode of greeting, and every one sought to excel. So great a degree of elegance did some of the young dandies impart to their performance, that the members of the female Areopagus did them special honour. Each gentleman approached his partner, and quitted her, with a bow à la victime. Some of the most polished among the cavaliers had their hair cropped close at the back of the neck, copying the style of Samson in the toilette of the condemned. The ladies followed suit, and the coiffure à la victime spread throughout France. To crown this ghastly jest, the daughters of persons who had died under the guillotine sometimes wore a red shawl, in memory of the one that the executioner cast over the shoulders of Charlotte Corday, and Mesdames de St. Amarante, before they ascended the scaffold"; and sometimes a thin red ribbon was worn around the neck, to imitate the knife-mark. The waltz had but recently come in, and they claimed it at the Bal des Victimes.

Thermidor, followed by the Directory, had shifted the clock for everything: manners, morals, customs, and clothes. Manners returned to the barbaric simplicity of the nursery; morals slept;

customs veered to the pagan; and clothes, for ladies, were abolished. "Is she naked?" asks the fierce Mercier, of a lady surrounded by a crowd of admirers. "I can scarcely tell. Come a little nearer; here's a subject fit for my pencil. Look at her thin pantaloons! Are they not like the celebrated skin breeches of his Highness the Comte d'Artois? This lady's under-garment, tight as you see it, seems a kind of silk in texture, and is set off with a bracelet. Her dress above it, slit open to a nicety, shows the full bosom swelling beneath a finely-painted gauze. The chemise of transparent cambric shows both legs and thighs, and these, you see, have golden circlets set with diamonds. . . . So slight is the veil over all, that I think modesty might gain by the removal of it. . . . Splendid, indeed, the days that have succeeded to Robespierre's!"

Octave Uzanne observes:—

"The ladies insisted that their dresses should show every contour, and be of transparent fabrics. In vain the doctors spent their breath in assertions that the French climate, temperate as it was, did not admit of clothing as light as that of ancient Greece. The counsels of the disciples of Hippocrates fell on deaf ears, and, at the close of the year VI, Delessart found himself in a position to assert that he had seen more young girls die during the reign of nakedness veiled in gauze, than during the forty years preceding it. A few daring women —among them the fair Mme. Hamelin—ventured

to show themselves without any covering save a straight garment of gauze. Others displayed their naked bosoms. But these indecencies were not repeated. The good sense of the populace, and its rough jests, nipped them in the bud, and, when the yells and insults of the passers-by drove them back to their own homes, the profligate women, who were dead to any sentiment of shame, realized, at least, the danger of their own impudence."

The same writer says, in his comments on the close of the eighteenth century:—

"It is fair to confess that the ladies of the Directory period possessed none of the delicacy and languid grace with which our fancy has endowed them, nor any of those ultra-polished and die-away charms which in later times were held to constitute refinement. Without exception, almost, they were buxom, healthy, loud-voiced beings, masculine in their ways, broad in their talk, opulent of charm, with the appetites of nursing mothers, greedy and dainty too, ruled solely by their senses, in spite of their sudden simulated fainting-fits and sham headaches. It was a sight to behold them, when the concert was over, falling on the supper, demolishing turkey and cold partridge, truffles and anchovy pâtés, in mighty mouthfuls, pouring down wine and liqueurs; eating, in fact, as one pamphleteer put it, 'for every fundholder, and soldier, and clerk and employé in the Republic.' And, indeed, these half-naked nymphs were bound to provide themselves a solid framework to resist the

chest attacks that lay in wait for them at every door. The winter draughts would soon have triumphed over those cambric gowns and tunics à l'aurore, if a course of high feeding had not preserved their wearers."

The frightful reaction which was called the Terror produced, of necessity, another reaction in Thermidor; and society, even where it pretended to some degree of regulation, was a scramble, a hurly-burly, and a riot. By contractors, by speculators in corn and land, and by other adventurers, fortunes had been magically made. The vulgar rich, with their vulgar rich wives, thrust their way to the front, and were envied. As to the means by which great sums of money had been gathered, questions were not openly asked. The business in chief, now that the Terror was overpast and there seemed a prospect of retaining what one held or might acquire, was to follow the example of the clever few who had turned to their own profit the season that had been the ruin of the many. The rage for pleasure notwithstanding, there were anxious souls in the medley of guests astonishingly garbed at every festival, semi-public, or private, in the newly-constituted Paris. The salon of Mme. Tallien, the most beautiful and influential woman of the Directory, and the woman who lent an ear to all requests, was haunted nightly by petitioners of both sexes. Bonaparte, in his stained and rusty regimentals and broken boots, might have been overheard one evening soliciting her interest with

Barras for a length of cloth to make him a new uniform. Women had places to seek for a husband, a son, or a lover; other women were seeking something for themselves. The hunt was prosecuted in every salon of Paris.

Josephine was seen at Mme. Tallien's, Josephine was seen at the voluptuous and all-powerful Barras's, Josephine was seen elsewhere, and Josephine was as needy a lady as any in the town at this glittering and pleasure-ridden but not too salutary epoch. It is probable that no two persons were more concerned than she and Bonaparte about the days that loomed from Thermidor. Every hour of the first phase of Bonaparte is strenuous, beset with care, harassed with forebodings of the future. The Creole Josephine bends much more easily to circumstance, and acquiesces rather than opposes; but under the Directory she is, by pressure and without choice, an adventuress with a very limited horizon, and for her children and herself she schemes with an eye to safety.

In the first weeks of her freedom she risked a country residence at Croissy, near Paris. It was no doubt a calculated venture, a draft upon the destiny that as yet was undisclosed. Fashionable Paris, flowing excitedly between the capital and the pleasant rural parts beyond it, might come to Croissy. The handsome, dissolute Barras, who, for the sins of the Directory, personified that brief *régime*, and was almost as completely its dictator as Bonaparte was the dictator of the Consulate,

did certainly go there. He was, on the occasion of his every visit, the supreme guest at Croissy, and Josephine was at shifts to entertain him. Game and fruit furnished a table the plates and service of which were procured by loan. Josephine, it may be supposed, was quietly playing for the end of her own security, but no woman could be hostess to Barras and keep a name unspoiled. That raffish patron of the sex was accustomed to exact for his patronage a payment in kind which the morals of the Directory allowed, and which was perhaps not always or often disputed. It is generally taken that Mme. Tallien was one of the mistresses of Barras, and he himself has hinted in terms the plainest that Mme. de Beauharnais was another. This is not proved, and, good evidence from other sources failing, the "cankered hate" of Barras's references to Josephine and Bonaparte quite puts him out of court. Barras is both liar and villain. Where envy moves him he deals wholesale in detraction, and the reputation of the woman exposed to his tainted and tainting breath asks the mercy of historian and critic. Barras lied of set purpose, and with a gusto like that with which he bounced about his intrigues and amours. He is probably a liar at this day in whatever circle of the Inferno has the evil luck to possess him. So far as Barras is concerned, Josephine receives the full benefit of the doubt.

But she wanted a husband at her side; a husband to protect and a husband to support her. Her

children, Eugène and Hortense, mounting in years, had need of the guiding and controlling hand of a father. Josephine required money. Throughout her life, indeed, she demanded money more than love, albeit she was not what we call a mercenary woman. Her appetite for money was that of the born spendthrift. When she has cash she scatters it with both hands, and when it is gone she scatters rather more on credit. But she bestows on others as readily as she disburses for herself; and on her prodigious charities—unscientific and indiscriminate as they were—rests the legend of Josephine the good. But, for Josephine, the blessed days of credit without limit were not yet arrived, and wherever she went debts rose around her like a rampart. She suffered eternally from Falstaff's malady of galloping consumption of the purse, the malady that knows no remedy.

Here, then, in Thermidor, or somewhat later, was the hour; and the man, as we have seen, had presented himself. It is to be remembered that the Bonaparte of this hour was a far more promising person than the sallow, long-haired soldier of fortune who had whispered Mme. Tallien his want of a roll of cloth for new clothes. The general had got his new clothes. He had got other things besides. He was installed in quarters, he went abroad now in a carriage ("en superbe équipage," says Lévy), he who but a little while before had wetted himself to the skin on a night of rain, seeking a doctor for a sick man. In a word, the Bona-

parte of the hour of Josephine's necessities was something more than the hero of Paris; he must have been regarded by all who were in touch with the Government as a person whose future was illimitable. And Bonaparte was in love, abjectly, with Josephine.

On the lady's side, the story of the courtship is sadly shorn of romance. Art did not lack her to persuade Bonaparte that his passion was returned; but passion, in truth, she had none, and we should perhaps flatter her memory by suggesting that even her affections were engaged. She was not in the least in love with Bonaparte, and her friends were well aware that she was not. Circumstances of the newest had made him the most eligible person she had met since her return to the world she had so nearly quitted. Her fancy, no doubt, was smitten. The lean, pale-faced, half-starved Bonaparte, with the perfect mouth and the glow of his falcon's eyes, had slain no hearts as yet; but some among the few women he had ventured to approach had been magnetized a little by that woe-begone face, thrilled a little by the quick, vibrating voice that could be velvety enough, and drawn and cowed a little by the half-command of a youth's inarticulate genius. The youth of genius, changed in an hour into the victorious man who embodied the hopes of a struggling State, might have weakened a nature less facile than Josephine's.

There are tales that their courtship was partly a liaison. We may believe of this what we please.

Marriage under the Directory was sometimes not more than an excuse for a flying liaison; a liaison was sometimes cemented into an enduring marriage. There would have been nothing unusual or unfashionable in an amour before marriage, but in Josephine's situation it is permissible to think that prudence would have stepped between concupiscence and interest. Her whole interest lay in fastening through matrimony to a man who could give her the assurance or the promise of maintenance for the children and a reasonable future for herself. It was in this expectation that she married Bonaparte.

Josephine might be lukewarm; Napoleon, for his part, was under an absolute possession; he had, as the phrase goes, a demon upon him. One letter of his, written during the progress of their brief courtship, and celebrated as a witness of his passion, must be quoted once again.

"I awake filled with you," he writes. "Your picture and yesterday's intoxicating evening have given my senses no repose. Amazing indeed, sweet and incomparable Josephine, is the effect that you have wrought within my heart. Are you angry, do I see you sad, are you uneasy—my very soul is bruised, and for this poor friend of yours there is no rest. But is there more when, abandoning myself to that emotion which subdues me utterly, I drink a flame of fire from your lips and from your heart! Well indeed did I prove this night how different from you is your mere picture. You start

at midday; in three hours I shall see you. Meanwhile, mio dolce amor, a million kisses; but give me none, for they are a consuming fire in my veins."

At this height of passion, as we shall see, Bonaparte sustains himself for a long time. The conduct of a vast and difficult campaign, victory in the field of arms, increase of personal glory, have no power to qualify his overmastering love for Josephine.

Through the winter of 1795 the courtship went on; Josephine evidently playing her part with skill; for Bonaparte, notwithstanding that his days are given to the preparation of a plan of attack for the army of Italy, is more and more the devout and ardent lover. His formal demand was made in January 1796. Josephine, who had been living with an aunt, Fanny de Beauharnais, in the Rue de l'Université, moved in January into a small "hotel," 6, Rue Chantereine, bought or rented from the wife of the actor Talma. Of this "Hôtel Chantereine" nothing now remains.

Bonaparte, once accepted, paraded the lady proudly among his friends in Paris; but Josephine, even yet, had not quite made up her mind! There is a story, often given in the French, and pretty well authenticated, of a visit which she paid, on the very eve of marriage, to her notary Raguideau. Bonaparte, whom she took with her, sat in an ante-room, and listened to the criticisms of the lawyer.

"What! Marry a general who has nothing but his cloak and sword! Why, he lives in a den or

a hovel, doesn't he? A little bit of a general without a name or a future, under the feet of all the generals in the Republic! You'd much better marry a contractor."

Bonaparte passed these compliments without a word; and it is said that, eight years later, on the eve of his coronation, he summoned Raguideau to the Tuileries, and gave him a ticket for a good place in the cathedral, that the man of law might see how far the "little general without a future" had brought his client on her way.

The marriage was really a little like an elopement, an elopement without its hazard. There was no need, of course, for the young people to run away, and run away they did not; but they were married, with the scantest ceremony, at a rather late hour of the night. It was what Maître Raguideau might have called (and he it was, perhaps, who did so call it) a "cloak and sword wedding."

No. 3, Rue d'Antin is one of the few houses upstanding at this day in Paris that claim a place in the true history of Bonaparte. Dating only from the Regency, it was then the property of the Marquis de Mondragon, who, among other high or ornamental offices, held that of private secretary to Madame, a lady of strong, humorous, and pungent memory. The Revolution confiscated this mansion as the "estate" of an aristocrat, and it was converted to the use of the Mairie of the 2nd arrondissement of Paris. In 1815, after the upheaval of Waterloo, the Hôtel de Mondragon reverted to

the representatives of the family who had been its first owners. Rented from them by the City of Paris, it still served, says M. Lenôtre, as the Mairie of the 2nd arrondissement, until very early in the reign of Louis Philippe. The house is now in the possession of the Paris and Netherlands Bank, and the chamber that was formerly the Salle des Mariages is the office of one of the directors. In this chamber, on the night of the 9th of March, 1796, was celebrated the civil marriage of Napoleon Bonaparte and Josephine de Beauharnais.

Me. Raguideau had drawn up the civil contract the day before. Bonaparte's declaration was as simple as might be. He owned, he said, "neither real nor personal estate"; was indeed possessed of nothing "except his wardrobe and his military accoutrements." The estimated value of these he was on the point of stating, when he suddenly broke off, unwilling to lay bare his poverty. Then, in a spasm of faith, he settled on his future wife "a dowry of an annuity of fifteen hundred francs." Josephine's contribution was nothing at all, and had she ventured into particulars of her wardrobe there would have been little but underwear in the list.

M. Lenôtre says: "The original of this contract is preserved among the records of Me. Mahot de la Quérantonnais, the present owner of Me. Raguideau's office. Its only interest lies in its signatures. That of 'Napolione Buonaparte,' hastily written and already illegible, is distorted, passionate, and

underlined by a broad stroke, and forms a contrast to that of Josephine—'M. J. R. Tascher,' traced with an indifferent hand. We can imagine the honest scrivener casting a protecting look at the poor devil of an officer, 'without either real or personal estate of any kind,' whose paltry possessions he had just set down on paper."

At eight in the evening of March 9th, at the Mairie in the Rue d'Antin, the marriage certificate was signed. "The reception-room where this ceremony was performed has preserved its pompous decoration of the beginning of the eighteenth century: a broad frieze in two shades of gold, on which divinities, mingled with cupids, sport in grottoes, wainscotings, doors, shutters, mirror-frames with their borders of reeds and roses, garlands, and old gold; frieze panels on which mythological heroes are enthroned in Olympian heavens after the style of Natoire."

It has more than once been said that on the wedding night Bonaparte had to rouse the mayor in his bed for the due performance of the ceremony. This was not the case. The mayor, who could not possibly suppose that this was a wedding for history (it must in truth have been one of the dullest little affairs he had ever presided at), had indeed gone to sleep, but not beneath his counterpane. The fact is that Bonaparte was late, and kept the company waiting. A small company it was, and with one, or at the most two exceptions, very undistinguished.

No member of the bride's family was present, no member of the bridegroom's. Josephine's children (and it was good of her that she had not told them what manner of man he had been to her) cherished a romantic memory of their father, and had opposed the second marriage. As for the Bonapartes, not one among them had a notion of what was happening at the Mairie in the Rue d'Antin. Madame Mère's consent to the match had never been asked. The eldest brother Joseph had not an inkling of it. Madame Mère, the brothers, and the sisters were none of them privy to the secret which must have been shared by a good many people in and about Paris. Bonaparte, aware that the whole family would be terribly jealous of the widow of the ex-aristocrat, had astutely resolved to marry her without their knowledge.

So, while the clock ticked in the gilded office of the Mairie, there were assembled, besides Josephine in her flowing and semi-transparent tunic, only Barras and Tallien, who were to sign for Bonaparte, Camelet, the confidential man of the bride, and mayor Leclerc. The clock ticked on, and the mayor went to sleep in his armchair. Suddenly, at about ten o'clock, there was a clatter of swords on the stairs, the door was thrown open, and Bonaparte, accompanied by his aide-de-camp, Lemarois, entered the room. Scarcely waiting to salute his guests, he shook the mayor into consciousness.

"Wake up, Monsieur le Maire! Come, marry us, marry us!"

The mayor, restored from dreams, was doubtless only too glad to marry and to speed them. Everything was dispatched in a hurry, and the marriage certificate is a wonder of irregularity. Bonaparte added eighteen months to his age, Josephine took four years from hers; and both produced certificates of birth which had been fabricated for the occasion. Bonaparte's stated that he was born in Paris on the 8th of February, 1768! Lemarois, it may be added, had no right at all to sign as a witness, inasmuch as he was under age. The mayor was probably the sole person present who did not know that the documents put in were farcical, and that the whole ceremony was legal only in a qualified degree. To the possible inquisitions of history no one gave a thought.

There was no wedding supper. It was growing late; the mayor saw the party off his premises, and no doubt went to bed. Barras's coach took him back to the Luxembourg, and the rest of the witnesses went their several ways. The luxury of a coach was Josephine's also, a barouche and two black horses. She had obtained them from the Committee of Public Safety, and as that body was not indiscriminate in gifts of barouches to ladies of the aristocracy who had escaped the guillotine, we may perhaps surmise that Barras had helped her to so useful a present. In the barouche with the two black horses Bonaparte and Josephine drove

to the modest hotel in the Rue Chantereine. Thus was solemnized, with such sparse solemnity, one of the most curious marriages in history.

Two days later, March 9th, Bonaparte set forth to take command of the army in Italy.

III

Bonaparte stayed two days at Marseilles on a visit to his mother, that handsome, shrewd, anxious, and very capable Corsican, who had known how to discipline her children, and of whom her children stood not a little in awe. To his mother Bonaparte gave the news of his marriage. Madame Bonaparte the elder made the best of it, but was inly persuaded that Joseph her firstborn was the wiser man in having taken to wife the daughter of Clary the soap-boiler. From this time to the end, the Bonapartes, mother and brothers and sisters, were the foes of Josephine. Sound Corsicans all, they were no strangers to hereditary hatred, and this domestic feud was never healed.

Still, the mother of the family was in duty bound to write to her daughter-in-law, who, by the way, had written first. As Mme. Letizia Bonaparte had almost no French, "and could scarcely write more than her own name," some one must have drawn up the letter for her.

"I am in receipt of your letter, madame, and

it could but heighten the estimate I had formed of you. My son had told me of his happy marriage, and from that moment I could not but esteem and approve you. When I have seen you my happiness will be complete. I beg you to know that I have a mother's tenderness for you, and shall cherish you as one of my own children. I understood from my son, and this is confirmed in your letter, that you would pass through Marseilles on your way to join him. I look forward, madame, to the pleasure which your visit to this place will afford me, and this anticipation my daughters share. Pray believe that my children, following my example, will show you all the friendship and tenderness which they give to their brother. Believe, madame, in the regard and affection of

"LETIZIA BUONAPARTE MÈRE."

A letter from Joseph followed the mother's.

"Madame, It was with the liveliest interest that I heard of your marriage with my brother. The friendship which binds me to him forbids me to question the happiness you will bring him. From the idea that I have formed of you, I am not less sure of it than he is. Receive, I beg of you, this expression of the fraternal sentiments of your brother-in-law."

For a daughter-in-law and sister-in-law the reception was frigid enough. But "malice domestic" scarcely wounded Josephine, who was never malicious towards any one. Bonaparte's own

letters, had she cared for them, would have yielded balm, if balm had been her need. They contain as much passionate love in headlong indifferent prose as could be crammed up into large sheets of paper. A very brief selection must be made from them.

On March 14th (three days after leaving Paris) he sat down to write to her at Chanceaux.

"I wrote you at Chatillon, sending you a power of attorney. . . . Each moment sunders us more widely, my beloved; each moment finds me less able to endure the separation from you. You are eternally in my thoughts, my imagination exhausts itself in guessing what you are doing. If I picture you sad, my heart is rent, my grief redoubles. If you are gay among your friends, I reproach you for having so soon forgotten the wretched parting three days agone. . . . May my good genius, which has ever held me safe in the midst of danger, enfold you. Ah! be not gay, be a little melancholy. . . . Write me, dear one, at full length, and take from your devoted and true friend these thousand kisses and another."

In the oblivion of passion, Bonaparte addressed this letter to "The Citizeness Beauharnais"!

Soon after this he receives letters from her (very few of Josephine's letters have come down to us), which fire his heart anew.

"What eloquence, what feelings you discover!" (One is tempted here to think that Josephine, like Mme. Letizia, must have found an amanuensis.)

"They are of fire, you set my poor heart ablaze! My sole Josephine, away from you there is no more happiness, away from you the whole world is a desert, wherein I stand alone. . . . You have taken from me more than my soul; you are the central and only thought of my existence. . . . To live for Josephine: that sums up my life."

From Albenga, in the first week of April:—

"Your last letter does not satisfy me; it is cold as friendship. . . . But oh! how I am infatuated. . . . It is impossible you should have inspired a boundless love without partaking of it."

Towards the end of April he begins impatiently to call her to him from Paris.

"Come soon. I warn you that if you delay you will find me ill; fatigue and your absence are more than I can endure together. Your letters make up my daily pleasure, and my happy days are not many. Junot is the bearer of twenty-two standards to Paris. You should return with him—do you hear me? . . . You will soon be beside me, on my breast, in my arms. Get wings and come quickly!"

But Josephine got no wings. Paris was not a place she was in haste to fly from. She was amusing herself very well; Barras's mimic but luxurious court was more attractive than the camp. Josephine was gadding to and fro with Mme. Tallien; spending all the money her husband could afford her, and going a-borrowing. The two children were temporarily off her hands; Eugène at the Collège

Irlandais, Hortense at the fashionable academy of Mme. Campan; not a cloud at present overcast the gay purposes of Josephine.

Arnault, in his very entertaining *Souvenirs d'un Sexagénaire*, tells us concerning the Josephine of these days that, though not the most beautiful, she was decidedly the most pleasing and good-natured woman to be seen at Barras's. Beautiful Josephine was not, and that term is very rarely met with in descriptions of her. A pretty mouth was spoiled by indifferent teeth, and to this defect was owing the "close-lipped smile" we read about in all the memoirs that are kind to her. With the smile went an amiable play of very pleasant eyes; and the light that visited those gems was as soft as it was dangerous to men. She had a voice that was seduction in itself; not thrilling, but murmurous and velvety, a lure and snare for the ear. Though she never sought to rival in wantonness of dress the Juno-like Tallien, who exhibited in public her modish legs to the modish knee, the Greek things that Josephine swayed and swam in—by day as by night—revealed every line of a form which kept almost through life the virgin graces of a nymph. Has not Napoleon himself left it on record that she was graceful even in going to bed?

With her arts of captivation perfected all at once, Josephine, who scarcely even simulated a love for her husband, knew that in Paris they would be at least as potent as in Italy; and Paris was home, and Italy was not. To Paris she clung desperately.

Bonaparte, abasing himself in his devotion, wrote frantically in the midst of the battles he was winning for the Republic; and his letters amused Josephine when she was bored, and bored her when she was amused. Her comment on them, when she showed the letters to her friends, was: "Il est drôle, Bonaparte!" Paris began to shout the victories of Bonaparte in Italy, and Josephine was pleased; but his letters, entreating, imploring, commanding her to join him, gave her now the blues and now a fit of merriment. She piled excuse upon excuse for remaining at the Rue Chantereine: she even invented a pregnancy—she who, during her second marriage, was never once pregnant.

There is pathos in the situation. Turquan says, not inaptly, that Bonaparte worships Josephine less like a man than like a youth at college, a "collégien." The officers on his staff in Italy, through all the earlier stages of the "miraculous campaign," not only beheld but heard from the general's own lips the passion that at once inspired and tormented him. Marmont relates in his *Memoirs* that, the novel greatness of the young Bonaparte's position notwithstanding, his daily and hourly engrossment in the interests confided to him, his thoughts about his own future, he was seldom too much occupied to talk of Josephine. "Of her and of his love he often spoke to me, in the effusive manner and with all the illusions of a very young man." One day he accidentally broke the glass of the miniature of Josephine which was always worn next his heart.

"See what has happened!" he exclaimed to Marmont. "My wife is either very ill or unfaithful."

Ill she was not, for all her pretences that way; nor, at this period, so far forth as is known, was she unfaithful. She was dancing, picnicking, flirting, at the Luxembourg, at Mme. Tallien's, at Mme. Récamier's, at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, at Saint-Cloud, at Sèvres, at Passy, at the Tivoli. Assuredly she was not thinking very much of Bonaparte, except—as on occasion of a letter from Italy—that he was "really too droll." Yet, as Turquan observes, what woman should not have been happy in knowing herself the source and fount of such a love? What woman should not have been proud as the newly-wedded wife of a man whose genius in the field was just beginning to focus the gaze of Europe? But the language of adoration that Bonaparte addressed to her, almost in tears, almost upon his knees, was unintelligible to the "légère Créole." Certain favoured members of the staff in Italy were not the only persons who received at this season the outpourings of that overflowing heart. He even wrote to Carnot, one of the Directors. "I owe you my particular thanks for the attention you have been good enough to show my wife. She is a sincere patriot, and I love her to madness." There could be no testimony more striking or more strange of an infatuation the most strange and striking in history. France at this moment was gaining more than was the wife her-

self by the intensity of Bonaparte's passion for Josephine; if we may accept the view of one historian, that, under the daily stimulus of this passion, his genius for war itself expanded to the utmost and rose to the highest. Josephine herself came to be saluted in public as "Our Lady of Victory." She liked the flattery, but went on making jokes about Bonaparte's love-letters.

But, in the course of time, having fibbed herself to the end of her resources, Josephine must needs pack up for Italy. Not for a moment did it occur to her that she might shine in Italy as she was now shining in Paris: Arnault tells us that at her last supper at the Luxembourg she "melted in a flood of tears, sobbed as if she were going to torture." She had comported herself better in Les Carmes, envisaging the guillotine! Junot and Murat had come to Paris with the flags and were to go back to Italy with Josephine. Joseph completed the escort.

The splendid Serbelloni palace at Milan had been prepared for her reception. She would have exchanged, says Arnault, the palace at Milan, "and all the palaces in the world," for the nest in the Rue Chantereine which she was locking up behind her. Adieu to Paris; and now for a miserable journey into benighted Italy! But the journey, as it turned out, was not wholly barren of episode. The paraphernalia of Josephine included her maid, Louise Compoint, "a fine strapping girl," and the poodle dog, Fortuné, that had bitten Bonaparte in

the leg on his wedding night. One big coach, it seems, sheltered all the travellers. Josephine disposed herself to flirt with Junot, a gallant and handsome young man. Junot, however, was soul and body for Bonaparte, and disregarded the bait. Instead, he regarded Louise, who was indiscreet enough to be complacent. Here was a comedy of imbroglio for the rest of the inside passengers! It was a situation, to be brief, which ultimately cost another to Louise; for scarcely had Josephine set foot in Milan when her handmaid, bereft of a character, was setting foot from out it. Her subsequent fate, according to rumour, was an English jockey. She might have been a duchess, for Junot became Duc d'Abrantès.

Received as a queen in Italy, Josephine had soon put Paris from her variable mind. The Palazzo Serbelloni, in itself a treasure-house, was now forthwith the centre of an elegant, effusive, and obsequious society; and for the amiable and bewitching hostess there was the copious homage that she loved. There was also, of course, the husband, whose "collegian's" transports of delight were the alloy of Josephine's Italian happiness; she consoled herself in reflecting that he had a war as well as a wife upon his hands. Naturally he was much from her. At Roverbella he wrote in the first week of July:—

"I have defeated the enemy. Kilmaine will send you a copy of the dispatch. I am tired out. I beg of you to come at once to Verona; I want

you, for I believe I am going to be very ill. From bed I send you a thousand kisses."

But for a Juliet at Milan it was a long step to a Romeo at Verona, and Josephine did not go. She was ill herself, she said. Bonaparte replied, urging her strongly to ride for the sake of her health: "it cannot fail to do you good." He has apparently forgotten his own illness. "I thought I loved you some days past," he says in the same letter, "but seeing you I feel that I love you more a thousand times. My worship of you increases every day." Again, from Marmirolo, on July 19, he writes: "For two days I have been without a letter from you—the thirtieth time to-day that I have told myself so. You think this very wearisome, but you cannot doubt the tender and unique anxiety I feel for you."

There might have been less of tenderness in Bonaparte's anxiety had he known, what was now beginning to be a theme of gossip at Milan, that his wife was taking steps to provide herself with a lover. This was a young dandy of the army, Hippolyte Charles by name; a little black-haired person with a tanned complexion, and pretty little hands and feet; incurably given to puns. He had, however, a very taking air in his hussar's uniform, and had unquestionably found favour in the eyes of Mme. la Générale. He haunted the Palazzo Serbelloni, and the scandal of the town had already linked his name with Josephine's. "He lunched at the Serbelloni," says Mme. d'Abrantès, "as often

as Napoleon was called elsewhere. It was known to every one in the army, and to every one in the town of Milan."

The scandal of the town could scarcely miss the camp, for officers of the staff were passing to and fro; but it had not yet attained the ear of Bonaparte. At about this time, nevertheless, a vague jealousy begins to stir in him. From Verona, under date September 17, he writes: "I write very often, my dear, and you very seldom. You are a bad and ugly girl, very ugly, as ugly as you are frivolous. It is shocking to deceive a poor husband, a devoted lover. Is he to lose his rights because he is far away, loaded with business, overcome with fatigue and worry? Without his Josephine, without the assurance of her love, what does the world hold for him? What shall he do?"

"Poor Bonaparte," comments M. Turquan, "who does not know that no more must be demanded of a woman's heart than it is capable of giving! He believes his Josephine good because he sees her as he would have her be, not as she is. His eyes are not yet opened to her careless and perhaps unconscious strayings. He fondly fancies that she loves him, because the eyes with which he looks on her are themselves full of love. But have a care, madame! Those eyes, I think, begin to see more clearly, despite the love which until now has blinded them. Jealousy begins to find a corner in that heart which until now has been so naïvely trustful."

But Bonaparte's letter, sounding a doubt, winds up thus:—

"Adieu, adorable Josephine: one of these nights will see your door flung open as by a jealous lover, and in a moment you will find me in your arms."

The shelter, alas! that Josephine was not too eager to extend.

She remains indifferent, totally apathetic. Caresses, menaces, the half-timid note of jealousy, leave her quite unmoved. Bonaparte grows indignant, tries a bolder tone.

"I don't love you one bit" [this from Verona on November 23rd]; "on the contrary, I detest you. You're a good-for-nothing, a tomboy, a silly, and a slut. You never write to me, you don't care an atom for your husband. You know the delight your letters are to me, and you fling me a bare half-dozen lines when the fancy takes you. What, then, do you do with yourself the livelong day, madame? What is the absorbing business that gives you no time to write to him who loves you? What interest is it that stifles and thrusts aside the love you once showed me? Who can this wonder of wonders be, this new lover, who engrosses your every moment, tyrannizes over your days, and forbids all concern for your own husband? Josephine, take care! One fine night your doors will be forced, and you will behold me."

But he ends on the customary note:—

"I hope that before long I shall enfold you in

these arms, and cover you with a million kisses burning as the sun of the equator."

The beauties of Italy, women of rank, women of the world, women of the opera were intriguing for a word or token of gallantry from the victorious young soldier who was fighting their battles against Austria. Neither word nor token did he vouchsafe them; every hour he could rob from war was given to these frantic epistles in which he grovelled before the one woman in Italy who treated him as naught. . . .

After the triumph of Arcoli he coursed back to Milan. Josephine was not there. She had gone to Genoa, in the company, there is little doubt, of Charles. To her at Genoa the husband dispatched this:—

"I reach Milan; I hurry to your room. I have left all that I might see you and press you in my arms. And you? You were not there. You are off to the towns and their merry-makings. You fly from me when I come; your dear Napoleon is dear to you no longer. You loved him for a caprice; your love or your caprice is turned to fickleness; you are all inconstancy. . . . I shall be here until the 9th. Do not put yourself out; have your fling of gaiety; pleasure was invented for you. The whole world is but too happy if it can amuse you; your husband is the one *un*happy man in it."

And on the day following:—

"You have not, I feel sure, had time to write

to me. . . . Berthier has been good enough to show me the letter you sent him. My intention is that you make no change whatever in your plans, nor with respect to the pleasure-parties that are arranged for you. I am worth no trouble on your part, and the happiness or unhappiness of a man you do not love can scarcely be expected to engage your interest. . . . Farewell, beloved wife; farewell, my Josephine!"

He seals the letter, and tears it open again. "I reopen my letter to give you a kiss. . . . Oh! Josephine! . . . Josephine!"

Is not this pitiful?

"Isn't Bonaparte droll?"

Who was his first informant as to the intimacy of Josephine with the pretty captain of hussars is not precisely known. Such a matter could not long be hidden from him, and the lady herself had no especial skill in intrigue. It is said that the pair were betrayed by Bonaparte's sister Pauline, and any Bonaparte woman would cheerfully have done that much for Josephine. The sisters and their formidable mother had just made her acquaintance at Montebello, Bonaparte's head-quarters during the summer heats; and a curious party it was that he gathered about him at that delightful spot. The ladies seem not to have been more than outwardly polite to Josephine; and Pauline, when her sister-in-law's back was turned, put out her tongue and made faces.

Perhaps it was Pauline who told tales, perhaps

it was another; the affair, as was inevitable, was somehow blown. The Duchesse d'Abrantès is responsible for the statement that Bonaparte wished to have his rival shot. The entertaining Duchess is not the most trustworthy gossip when Josephine is concerned, and this tale must be rejected. Not even in an army of the French Republic could a commander-in-chief court-martial a brother in arms, and procure him to be shot, for the offence of having made love to his wife. It would have been a proper Corsican vengeance, but an awkward theme for a report to the Directors in Paris.

Still, a commander-in-chief can do much, and Captain Hippolyte Charles vanished on a sudden from the army. Bonaparte dismissed and broke him. The young man had been found playing tricks among the contractors, and this was excuse enough for getting rid of him.

Josephine paid a double debt of tears. She wept first for the loss of Hippolyte Charles, and wept again to be restored to her husband's favour. The sea does not more easily resolve "the moon into salt tears" than she could cause her own to flow. She is one of the best, most abundant, and most successful weepers in history. She could at almost any time weep Bonaparte into contrition for things that he had said or not said, done or not done. She almost wept him from the great divorce. She wept him into weeping a little himself for having caused Josephine to weep for Charles. The reconciliation was made—the first of many, many reconciliations

due to those "pure messengers" from the eyes, if not the heart, of Josephine.

But from this date we note a certain difference. Not only did Bonaparte make no effort to detach himself from Josephine, he did not desire to make such an effort, could not possibly have succeeded in such an effort. She was the star both of his heart and of his will. He loved and continued to love her. From this date, nevertheless, the passion begins to melt from his letters; it is affection rather than passion that will now breathe from them. We may say, no doubt, that his own feelings begin to be in some slight measure qualified; but, with more assurance perhaps, we may say that he begins to realize a little of what is missing in his wife, and ceases—half involuntarily—to demand what it is absolutely not in her nature to bestow. He ceases to be the "collégien" in love.

In December 1797, summoned or invited by the Directors, Bonaparte returned to Paris. In January Josephine followed him. Hailed in Paris as the "liberator" of Italy (a title given with greater propriety some fifty years later to Garibaldi), Bonaparte was officially feasted in the style that was as trying to him as it was grateful to "la Générale." The banquet that shines with the best lustre in the memoirs was Talleyrand's, at which Bonaparte and Mme. Staël (the "Begum of Letters," whose white arms were presently "waving through the drawing-rooms of Europe") had their historic first encounter.

Bonaparte and his wife were once again installed

in the Rue Chantereine, where Josephine, with her incurable propensity to luxury, was for queening it in a style that her husband declined to support her in. She had, however, the joy of embellishing the house with her Italian spoils, the gifts—lavishly if not always too cordially heaped on her—of Pope, princes, and lesser notabilities. As the street, in Bonaparte's honour, had just been rechristened Rue des Victoires, Josephine's trophies had found a not inappropriate resting-place.

But Bonaparte's stay in Paris was short. His martial destiny was now fairly impelling him. He was named commander of the army for the invasion of England; this was soon converted into the Army of the East; and the change of policy made Egypt the next objective. For Egypt Bonaparte set his face in the spring of 1798. Josephine, who might have gone, and made a show of going, remained behind. What should she do in Egypt? Italy, which she had entered with distaste, had in the end amused her; but what could the spoliation of Egypt yield in pictures, statues, or cameos? She may never have heard of the Pyramids, and she did not want an obelisk.

She said good-bye to Bonaparte at Toulon; went to Plombières, for the waters; had an accident there, by the fall of a balcony, which might have been far more serious than it was; returned to Paris; and plunged into debt on the scale that never ceased to fascinate her by purchasing Malmaison for two hundred and ninety thousand francs.

Malmaison is the scene of the interlude that was so nearly fatal to her. Charles the beau and bold, eliminated from the army, was upon the bounty of his country, without visible means of subsistence. Was it not the beaux yeux of Josephine that had laid him low? She, the ever amiable, whose friends' afflictions were her own, took on her to be Charles's providence. Her influence sufficed to achieve for him a partnership in the firm of Bodin, contractors; and as the young man seems to have been genuinely talented in adulteries of all kinds, he was soon making a very nice income—somewhat, suggests Turquan, "au détriment de la nourriture du soldat," to the detriment of rations for the army. To make money at the expense of the service one has been cashiered from cannot but be an agreeable manner of revenge.

But Captain Charles's good fortune was not restricted to the sale of inferior victuals at splendid profits to the comrades he had ceased to bear arms with. By the providence of Josephine he was enabled to deal another stroke at the happiness of the commander who had broken him. In one and the same hour, to spoil a man's dinner in Egypt and his bed in France: was this not a consummation of the rarest?

For it is barely open to doubt that from a privileged and habitual visitor at Malmaison, Charles became an inmate of that hospitable seat. The pleasant walks of the château were perhaps inadequately screened; certain it is, at all events, that by

many of the neighbours the hostess and her dapper favourite were beheld strolling together of an evening, in the conversable way that spoke of friendship well matured: Josephine in her adorable Greek draperies, with a light veil about her temples; the rising contractor in civilian wear of black or dark blue. Evening by evening they were seen in this sociable proximity.

One would think that Malmaison had been an eyrie in the Alps, instead of a country house against the Saint-Germain road. Simple persons attached to those parts spoke of madame's "brother," and her manifest affection for him; others remarked on her tenderness for her "son." Paris, which was just at hand, was ignorant of any brother of madame's, and knew that her son was with Bonaparte in Egypt. Paris also knew that the companion of madame's evening walks was an ex-captain of hussars named Hippolyte Charles.

The unfaithful wife could scarcely have gone farther in imprudence. The Bonapartes, all the family, were an ever-present danger to her; and, although the least aggressive woman that ever lived, she had other enemies in the capital. What was her hope, flaunting a lover at Malmaison, to cheat the quidnuncs in Paris?

She had, however, bethought her of the possible support of a respectable friend or two in town, and had been sedulously cultivating the Gohiers, husband and wife. Gohier was the starched and elderly President of the Directory, and Mme.

Gohier had been Gohier's cook. These harmonious hearts opened to Josephine, who was pleased to make herself at home beneath their roof. But Gohier knew both what was doing and what was saying, and his hard sense counselled Josephine to divorce. Scandalized or not at the liaison, he saw the tremendous danger of it.

"Get a divorce," said Gohier. "Your feelings for M. Charles, you say, and his for you, are merely those of friendship; but, if this friendship is of a kind so exclusive as to compel you to outrage the proprieties, I must talk to you as I should in a case of love: get a divorce! If you don't, this is the sort of friendship that will land you in an awkward place."

But this, as one easily divines, is not the advice that would go down with Josephine. If her duties as Bonaparte's wife were irksome, the benefits of the situation were no longer despicable. Divorced from him, she might be cast upon the hands of Charles; and a partner in Bodin's, even with prospects of wealth unlimited from the sale of tainted meat and paper boots to the soldiers of the fatherland, was in no way yet the peer of the thrice-victorious general at their head. Besides, the lover might be in no burning haste to exchange that office for the husband's. No; divorce was not the most delectable solution.

Then, in an hour, the situation underwent a fateful change; and it was Josephine herself, in the character of prospective victim, whom the terrors

of divorce confronted. Dining in Paris one night at Barras's, she had Talleyrand beside her; and that accomplished trimmer devoted himself entirely to Mme. Tallien. So flagrant an example of disdain on his part was in itself a signal of alarm for Josephine. Had sudden death in Egypt swept Bonaparte from the theatre of politics? In that event, the common social correspondences would have restrained even a Barras from spreading his cloth for company. But Bonaparte alive was worse than Bonaparte dead for the wife who had once again openly betrayed his honour. It must be, then, that the haplessly transparent secret of Malmaison had revealed itself in Egypt. Talleyrand, convinced that Josephine's disgrace was imminent, had turned his supple back on her.

Next came the clap of news that Bonaparte was returning from Egypt, had returned; was approaching Paris, had all but reached it. These tidings overtook Josephine at the tranquil board of the Gohiers, where and when she was discussing with the President her precautionary measures. Gohier tells us, or gives us to think, that she was seized with a frantic anxiety for her safety, in the persuasive fear that the Bonaparte brothers and sisters had fortified the jealous husband with a battery of proofs against her.

In effect, Bonaparte's knowledge went deeper than the suspicions of Josephine on the subject. We have a letter of his to his brother Joseph (one among other letters found in a French vessel cap-

tured by English warships at the mouth of the Nile), dated July 25, 1798, in which he says:—

"I may reach France in two months or so, and to you I commit my affairs. I have grievous domestic trouble; the veil has been completely torn away. What a wretched condition is this, to feel in one's heart so many conflicting emotions in respect of one and the same individual. You know my meaning. I must have a house in the country on my arrival, somewhere near Paris or in Burgundy. I shall most likely pass the winter there, and immure myself. I am weary of human nature; solitude and isolation are a necessity to me. Fame oppresses me, feeling is exhausted, glory has become meaningless. . . . I intend to keep my house; I will give it up to no one."

At the date this was written Bonaparte was but twenty-nine years of age, and had been married little more than two years to Josephine de Beauharnais.

Few passages in the *Memoirs* of Bourrienne (at this time secretary to Bonaparte) have been oftener referred to than the dramatic one which discloses the furious grief of the dishonoured husband. Bourrienne observes a strange conversation between his master and Junot at the springs of Messoudiah.

"I saw Bonaparte walking alone with Junot, as indeed he often does. I was at a little distance from them, and—I know not why—my eyes were fixed on him as they talked. The face of the general, always very pale, was paler now than

ordinary. There was something convulsive in it, something wild in his air, and more than once he smote himself on the head. After a quarter of an hour's conversation, he left Junot and came towards me. I had never seen him more distraught, more preoccupied. I advanced to him, and the moment we met he said, with a sudden harshness: 'You never cared for me. . . . These women! . . . Josephine! . . . Had you been in the least attached to me, you would have told me all that I have just learned from Junot. Junot is a friend indeed. . . . Josephine! . . . And I six hundred leagues away! . . . You should have told me of it. . . . Josephine! . . . To have played thus with me! . . . She! . . . Ruin on them! . . . I will exterminate this race of fops and dandies! . . . As for her, divorce! . . . Yes, divorce! . . . Divorce public and scandalous! . . . I must write! . . . I know all. . . . This is your fault; you should have told me.'"

But was it indeed the fault of Bourrienne? He was, it is true, something more than Bonaparte's hired secretary; but he had had kind treatment from Josephine. He sought to appease the infuriated man, tried to make him think he had been hearing old wives' tales, and sounded the note of his augmenting fame in Europe.

"My fame!" cried Bonaparte. "Oh, what would not I give to be assured that what Junot has just told me is false! . . . If Josephine is guilty, divorce must separate us for ever. I'm not going

to be the laughing-stock of all the sots of Paris. I shall write to Joseph. He will see to the divorce."

In a while, and for a while, this wrath died down in Bonaparte; ready to whiten again. In a measure he took into his confidence young Eugène de Beauharnais, his aide-de-camp, though the youth was but just seventeen; and Eugène had some very difficult letters to write to his mother on the situation. But Bonaparte did not satisfy himself with the doubtful consolations of Eugène, who of course must defend his mother. He sought distraction in the first amour he had known since his marriage; and made poor M. Fourès unhappy, to blot from his mind for a time the infidelities of Josephine.

That lady, however, had reason enough for the tumult that filled her heart when the news ran that Bonaparte was returning from the East. His journey up through France to Paris was a taste of the progresses of triumph that custom was by and by to make a property of tediousness. The country was sick of the Directory; and with the coming of Bonaparte out of Egypt was associated in the popular imagination the idea of some immediate great awakening.

"From the olive groves of Provence to the boulevards of Paris," says Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, "the enthusiasm was indescribable. France had experienced no such thrill of emotion since the fall of the Bastille ten years before. Her greatest general, the aureole of victory on his brow, and invested with the glamour of an eastern crusade

. . . had returned to save the Republic, to clear out all that was sordid and corrupt, to quell the hideous menace of the Jacobins, and above all to finish the war by an honourable peace."

Bonaparte was a whole week, from October 9 to October 16, in traversing France from Fréjus. Josephine, on the morning after her dinner with the Gohiers, eager above everything to forestall her husband's family, had flown to meet him. Chance decreed that she should take the wrong road—and miss him.

Says her son:—

"At Lyon Bonaparte left his fellow travellers, and started alone in a light carriage, to get the quicker to Paris. By an unhappy accident, my mother, who, the instant she heard of our landing, had set out to meet him at Lyon, took the Burgundian route, while he was hastening by the Bourbonnais. We therefore reached Paris forty-eight hours in advance of her. The field was thus left open to her enemies, who lost not a moment in the effort to inflame the husband's mind against her."

By "enemies," Eugène intends the brothers of Bonaparte, two of whom—Joseph and Lucien, with Pauline's husband, Leclerc—more fortunate than Josephine, had fallen in with him upon the road. In what manner they primed him it is not difficult to guess. Bonaparte, in the light postchaise, sped glowering to Paris.

There, in the Rue Chantereine, he alighted at six

on an October morning—a chill hour at which to find one's door fast and nobody at home.

No; this is not the strict truth. The general's house was not barred against him. He was expected; there was a little crowd to welcome him; the clan Bonaparte had filled the house. His mother was there, his brothers—save those whom he had left upon the road—and his ardent, vociferous sisters. They were there to prove to him what family love did truly mean, the love of the Bonapartes. Those loving hearts were all assembled to greet him—with the sole disastrous exception of the one he looked for.

The mental state of Josephine also we may faintly realize when she learned, at some stage along her route, the trick that chance had played her. Instantly her horses were turned about, and at main speed she posted back to Paris. Bonaparte would think that she had fled from him; her fond relatives would assure him that she had. What more infernal jaunt could her malignant star have sent her on! She re-entered Paris feeble, wan, distracted, and desperate.

There had been no wife to extend her arms to the husband, there was no husband to extend his arms to the wife. Bourrienne informs us that Bonaparte "était exaspéré au dernier point." Three awful days elapsed, each minute of them a separate century of despair for Josephine. Three days he would not see her.

Aloof he sits
And sullen, and has pitched his tents apart.

Three days he would neither see her nor hold communication with her. He scouted the explanation of her misadventure on the road; declared, raving, that he knew she had eloped with Charles, and, thinking better of it, had returned to throw herself upon his pity. Pity in him she should find none. He would abandon her, and no one should put him from his purpose.

The friendly Collot, friend to both sides, tried to play the go-between. "All France is watching you," said Collot. "What! Are you going to make of yourself one of Molière's husbands? You!" Well, then, said Bonaparte at last, Josephine might betake herself to Malmaison. Under no roof of his should she set foot again. "Pooh!" said the peacemaker gently. "Your very rage tells me that you love her still. She will come with her little excuses to you, and you will forgive her." "I? I forgive her!" clamoured Bonaparte. "Never! Did I not know myself resolved in this, I would tear out my heart here, and fling it in the fire!" "Well, well," persisted Collot, in his smooth, pacific way, "send her off, if you must—but not now. This is not the moment. You have first of all to set the State upright again. When that is done, you may find—or not—a thousand reasons to justify your anger. France knows nothing of your private affair, but you understand our ways sufficiently to appreciate this fact, that

you cannot afford to begin by making yourself ridiculous."

But Bonaparte sat obdurate. At that moment he cared nothing for the ridicule of France; he was willing to be the butt and jest of Paris as "one of Molière's husbands"; his fixed idea was to send his wife packing, to whistle her down the wind with a divorce. He would give Collot no other answer.

We are to remember that Josephine herself, who had arrived late at night, was in the house all this while. The clan had decamped; satisfied, no doubt, that they had wrought the heart of Bonaparte to the right temper. He sat insulated in his study, the door locked, and would entertain no parley.

Josephine, all tears, contrite and shaken, approached and tapped on the door. Not a sound in response. "Open to me," she wailed; "open the door, my friend, my kind friend: I will explain everything. Oh! he won't open the door. . . . What have you against me? Tell me! . . . Oh! my friend, if you but knew the agony you are causing me."

Bonaparte, paler now than ever, we may think, behind that unyielding door, is said to have hissed out some inarticulate rageful words. The sobs of Josephine echoed through the house. What was this inarticulate fury that opposed her? Never before had Bonaparte resisted her like this. Never until now had her tears failed to weaken him. She sank mute, some tell us, full length on the stairs

outside the door, at the end of her strength and her resources.

No; not yet quite at the end of her resources: one hope remained. There were the children, Eugène and Hortense: he had always been so kind to the children. Speedily some one was dispatched to fetch them. They, well knowing, we may fancy, what a storm was tearing the home, ran to their mother's aid. What a sight! Poor Josephine, half-clad, outstretched upon the stairs, tear-stained and moaning, waving her hands feebly at the unrelenting door.

The two young ones now raised their voices for her, protesting her innocence, imploring the step-father that he abandon not her or them. Their mother would die of grief, they said; and had not they themselves lost a father on the scaffold, and were they not now dependent on that father whom Heaven had sent them? Would he desert them all?

The door was opened, and the children were allowed in.

"Well," said Bonaparte presently, "go and fetch your mother."

The siege was ended. The peace was struck.

Bourrienne adds that Collot came to lunch the next day, and was received by Bonaparte, who looked a little sheepish. He gave Collot his own version of the reconciliation. "Well," said he, "she's here after all! . . . How could I help it, Collot?" for Collot had made haste to assure the general that he had done emphatically the right thing.

"As she was going down the stairs crying, I saw Eugène, and there was Hortense in tears too. I can't stand too many tears, Collot, and that's the truth. Eugène was with me in Egypt, you know: a brave and good boy, and I had grown to look on him as my adopted son. Hortense is just making her entry into the world, and every one who knows her speaks well of her. I declare to you, Collot, I was profoundly moved. The sobs of those poor young things were too much for me. I said to myself: 'Ought they to be victimized for the fault of their mother?' I kept Eugène with me, and Hortense came back with her mother." "They will be grateful to you, be sure of that," said Collot. "They ought to be, Collot, they ought to be: they have cost me enough!"

Not forgetting that Bonaparte had been unfaithful to his wife with Mme. Fourès, we may admit that he behaved with generosity. He made only one condition with Josephine, the not unreasonable one that she should see no more of the ex-captain of hussars. Bonaparte himself, if we may trust a curious story, beheld him once again. He was going one day with Duroc to examine the Austerlitz Bridge. A carriage overtook them, and as it passed, Bonaparte gripped his companion by the arm and turned very white. The occupant of the carriage was Hippolyte Charles.

It may be asked, was the reconciliation complete between Bonaparte and Josephine? We have had, through Bourrienne, the testimony of the peace-

maker Collot. An earlier and more important witness was Lucien Bonaparte. Calling at the Rue Chantereine, at seven in the morning, he had found husband and wife in bed.

IV

From this date we hear no more of the infidelities of Josephine. It is the infidelities of Bonaparte with which, in the main, we shall henceforth be occupied. We may scarcely, in the case of Josephine, speak of "that fierce thing they call a conscience," for Josephine's was made in Martinique; and, wherever made, conscience, as Sheridan says, "has no more to do with gallantry than it has with politics." But she had felt a shock that had come very near to sinking her. She had only just escaped the public repudiation at her husband's hands which would have left open to her scarcely any other career than the courtesan's. And Josephine, though not a model woman, or a very wise, was a passing clever one. She could, at least, "perceive the sun at noonday"; and the mode of adventure that might spell divorce lost its peculiar savour. Bonaparte, less easily divorced (the facile, iniquitous pull of the man over the woman!) was just breaking ground in this direction.

For the clan Bonaparte, the reconciliation was a reverse. From Mme. Bonaparte, Mère, to Jérôme, who was turning fifteen, they were furious. Josephine, who had as little skill as liking for the

pure offensive, essayed the truce that might conduct to peace. She thought of marrying Hortense to the truculent little Jérôme. She fancied, says M. Turquan, that she had perceived the beginning of sympathy between them. She had seen them playing together in the diminutive garden of the Rue Chantereine. To link them now by betrothal, were this possible, would be a consummate stroke. It would be the breaking of the feud. At best, the peace of the families up to this had been an armed one; here was hope of converting it into an enduring amity.

But Josephine's conspiracy for union came to nothing. The Bonapartes were not prepared to treat with her. So sure had they made of expelling her from among them, that, when they realized that she was still the wife of Bonaparte, their malevolence built against her a stiffer barrier than before. In the end it was Louis who fell to the violet eyes and golden tresses of Hortense—and the marriage was a tragedy of the commonplace.

V

As this is a history neither of war nor of politics, the *coup d'état* of Brumaire (November 1799) concerns us only from the personal standpoint. It is Brumaire that overthrows the Directory, and this signal revolution within a revolution makes Bonaparte for the first time a political character in

France. Henceforward he is as important in politics as in war.

In the chapter on Brumaire, in the eighth volume of the *Cambridge Modern History*, Mr. H. A. L. Fisher says: "By the spring of 1799 the government of the Directory had become completely discredited. . . . Amid the disorder, the misery, and the vices of the time, there was one all-pervading passion—the craving for peace abroad and methodical government at home. Every one was disgusted with the Revolution; but no one save the priest and the *émigré* wished to recall the *ancien régime*." Dr. Fortescue, in the admirable introduction to his admirable version of Thibaudeau's work on the Consulate, cites a pregnant passage from the *Souvenirs* of the Duc de Broglie.

"Those who have not lived through the epoch of which I speak can form no idea of the profound misery into which France fell during the period between the 18 Fructidor (September 1797) and the 18 Brumaire (November 1799). We were plunging under full sail back to the abyss of the Terror, without a gleam of consolation or of hope. The glory of our arms was tarnished, our conquests lost, our territory threatened with invasion. The *régime* of the Terror no longer appeared as an appalling but temporary paroxysm, conducting of necessity through a salutary reaction to a more settled order of things. The reaction had failed utterly, the Government, which owed to it its existence, was transporting its founders to perish at Sinamary. All

the efforts made by honest statesmen to secure the legal enjoyment of their rights had been crushed by violence.

"There seemed to be nothing before us but to return to a bloodthirsty anarchy, the duration of which it was as impossible to foresee as it was to find any remedy. The remedy was found on the 18 Brumaire. Not that the 18 Brumaire was alone sufficient. We had gone through plenty of *coups d'état* during the last ten years, but we had found hitherto none of the qualities which can alone excuse a *coup d'état:* the genius, wisdom, and vigour which could enable its author to turn his victory to the benefit of society and save us from further danger of violent revolution. The 18 Brumaire was, as its author intended it to be, the opposite of the 18 Fructidor. It restored all that the 18 Fructidor had destroyed. It founded the order of civilization under which we still live, in spite of all the changes of half a century."

The vibrant story of the *coup d'état* of Brumaire (November 1799), of first importance in a biography of Napoleon Bonaparte, possesses for us only a secondary interest. More than once Bonaparte had snubbed Josephine for an interference in politics which, as he conceived, displayed her inconspicuous intellect at its least conspicuous; but he was fain to admit that the part she played under him in the plots and counter-plots of Brumaire was neither maladroit nor valueless. Josephine had no greater genius for conspiracy than she had for any other

mode of intellectual exercise, but such designs of State as could be pushed in flirtation by a pretty woman in her own drawing-room were eminently to her liking. And the salon in the Rue des Victoires (as the Rue Chantereine, in Bonaparte's honour, had just been rechristened), magnetically drawing in these days of perplexing expectancy the representatives of all parties in Paris, was a fair stage for her talents. She did the honours there with native grace to a nondescript crowd of "generals, deputies, royalists, Jacobins, abbés, a minister, and the president himself of the Directory." Bonaparte aired the diplomatic arts he was learning, "discoursing to his colleagues of the Institute on the state of the ancient monuments of Egypt and the prospects of a Suez Canal." Due allowance made for the anxieties that wait on all attempts to change the settled order, the march of affairs to the revolution of Brumaire was comparatively easy. Not a drop of blood was spilled. Bonaparte, opposed by the Jacobins, and fearing poison, might carry his own bread and wine to the banquet offered him by the Councils; and might even, for a night or two, sleep with pistols under his pillow. For the most part, however, as the German historian Lenz observes, everything in the tragi-comedy of the 18 Brumaire "went as if by clockwork."

When the curtain had finally dropped upon the scene Bonaparte was First Consul and the practical Dictator of France. In his proclamation to the nation on the eve of the new century, December

15, 1799, he said: "Citizens! The Revolution has returned to those first principles from which it started. It has reached its end."

Josephine, as Consulesse, found herself luxuriously nested in the Petit Luxembourg. Thus far had the cloak and sword marriage brought the sugar planter's daughter from Martinique. The Petit Luxembourg already had something of the air of a court, and we note that the courtly title of "Madame" began to displace the sans-culottic one of "Citizeness."

Bonaparte and his wife, as we know, had started on the adventures of matrimony with scarcely a shot in the locker. Josephine, as we also know, had returned from Italy with much useful plunder; but ready money in satisfying quantities had not heretofore been hers to command. The credit, however, that was wanting to the wife of the general still carving his way to fortune would scarcely be refused to the wife of the First Consul; and Josephine had very soon begun the practices that were to cost her husband such enormous sums.

Bonaparte, to whom fame and power had brought as yet no wealth, had taken one of his wife's necklaces for a wedding present to his sister Caroline, just married to Murat. Josephine ought not to have been very angry, for had not Bonaparte recently paid off her debts he would have had money enough for the gift to Caroline. Angry or not, she meant to replace the necklace.

It happened that Foncier, that very fashionable

jeweller, had a lovely set of pearls to dispose of. The price was a little daunting; two hundred and fifty thousand francs, says Bourrienne, five hundred thousand, says Mme. d'Abrantès. It was a case for courage, and Josephine, with no money at all, went to Foncier's and bought the pearls. Then she summoned to her confidence and aid Berthier, the war minister. "You see," she said to Berthier, "I meant to pay Foncier out of my savings, but as the poor man seems rather in want of the money you must . . . well, you know what, Berthier." Berthier of course knew what . Also, he knew how. Some monies on their way to, or intended for, the hospitals in Italy, did not reach that destination; but Foncier ceased to present his bill.

Having secured the pearls, Josephine's next difficulty was how to wear them. Bonaparte would hardly fail to recognize that they were none of his offering. "I really don't know how I shall ever put the things on," the Consulesse said one day to Mme. de Rémusat, to whom she was showing them. "Bonaparte would be sure to make a fuss, though after all they are only a little present from a father whose son I had got out of a scrape." Mme. de Rémusat, who did not believe in the father or his peccant son, was unable to cut the knot.

Josephine's best help was usually drawn from the other sex. She betook herself to Bourrienne, the confidential secretary. "You know, Bourrienne," she said, "there is going to be a great reception to-morrow, and at any cost I must wear my

pearls. But you know *he* will begin to scold when he sees them. Now you must keep near me; and if he asks where the pearls came from, I shall say I have had them ever so long."

Bourrienne could do nothing but promise his assistance, and the next evening Josephine figured in the pearls of great price. Bonaparte stopped before her.

"Well, what have you been doing to yourself? You look very fine. What pearls are these, eh? I don't remember them."

"Mon Dieu! This is the necklace the Cisalpine Republic gave me. I have turned it about and put it in my hair."

"Well, but, it seems to me——"

"Ask Bourrienne. He can tell you."

"Well, what do you say, Bourrienne? Do you remember them?"

"Oh, yes, general! I remember very well having seen them before."

The pearls had in fact been seen before by Bourrienne, and he informs us further that Josephine had received a collar of pearls from the Cisalpine Republic, "but they were incomparably less beautiful than Foncier's."

In a sordid little comedy of this sort Josephine was, as the French say, "de première force"; and, as Mme. d'Abrantès says, she "could tell just what lies she pleased." With this side of her character Bonaparte grew better acquainted as the years of their married life revolved. When money was in

question, Josephine had the morals of a fox in a hen-roost. Fouché bribed her (to the tune, it was said, of a thousand francs a day) to keep him posted on affairs at the Tuileries; and M. Turquan reproduces from the memoirs of Thiébault the story that she "pocketed a commission of half a million francs for arranging in the interests of the Compagnie Flachat the contract for supplies to the army in Italy—those Flachats to whose barefaced robberies were traceable the misery and famine of our troops at the siege of Genoa, and the pact with Mélas that was forced upon Masséna."

From the Luxembourg Bonaparte removed himself, with sagacious audacity, to the Tuileries. He knew, even at this date, that he was indispensable to France. In many ears the Tuileries must have sounded as a name of omen, but Bonaparte was far too clever to quarter himself alone in that ancient abode of royalty. He caused the "pavillon de Flore" to be assigned to the third consul, Lebrun; Cambacérès preferred to stay in his old residence.

Josephine passed her first night at the Tuileries in the bedroom of Marie Antoinette. "You little Creole!" Bonaparte is reported to have exclaimed. "Tumble into the bed of your masters!"

Life at the Tuileries, on all occasions of parade, began to be stiff and stylish. The First Consul had a power of assimilation that is not always found in the parvenu of genius; and, though his taste had no depth, and naturally inclined a little to the simple and the vulgar, he was an actor of the very best.

At the Tuileries he began to have visions tinged with purple, and his policy was one of levelling up. Josephine had to accommodate herself to a new social set. The sculptured calves and knees of Mme. Tallien were not on view at the Tuileries, where they might have offended such a guest as Mme. de la Rochefoucauld. There were receptions of ambassadors; etiquette was once again "in the air"; and there were those who said that Bonaparte was playing at being King. But if, in the *entourage* of the First Consul at the Tuileries, the dawn of a new court may be descried, it is a more seemly prospect, as regards both dress and manners, than could have been seen late or early in the days of the Directory. Government itself was in some degree restored to dignity when its supporters laid aside the garments of *opéra bouffe* and the conversational style of the flash-house. Society had not all at once grown modest in dress and decorous in the externals of behaviour, but it no longer chuckled over its wantonness, and was a good deal better than it had been. Bonaparte himself, though he was now not without mistresses, gave no public example of licence in conduct; worked without ceasing, and lived frugally enough. There is no burking the fact that Josephine was never again to be free from cause of jealousy; but at least she had never to endure the daily insult of her husband's avowed and overt preference for a concubine. No leman of Bonaparte's rode abroad with him, or was set up in a great establishment, or enjoyed a tittle of

authority in the State, or any warrant to boast the favouritism she could temporarily claim.

Josephine had given cause of jealousy, and was now in her turn to feel the smart. As Consulesse, nevertheless, she was leading a life that she relished; and from Bonaparte she received a thousand proofs that, let him wander as he would, she it was who held the worthier part of his affections. After the dazzling triumph of Marengo, while he was listening to the continuous acclamations of the crowd, Bonaparte turned to Bourrienne and said, "You hear these plaudits? There seems no end to them. The sound is as sweet to me as the voice of Josephine."

The First Consul must have half-effaced from memory the sufferings of Bonaparte on account of Hippolyte Charles, for he greatly favoured Malmaison as a residence. Josephine, too, had a particular fondness for Malmaison, notwithstanding that, when she and Bonaparte were more or less alone at the château, there must have been many hours of tedium. During the days when Bonaparte worked incessantly, life at Malmaison was humdrum. "The First Consul gave to his wife all the time he could spare from toil, but this was only when they met at meals, and the general seldom sat long at table."

The capacity and passion of Bonaparte for work are a theme too trite to enlarge upon. Lévy overstates it scarcely at all when he says: "This man, one perceives, is invariable in his habits. Take

Napoleon where one will, in the hour of triumph or defeat, of splendour or distress, at the moment of pompous entry into an enemy's capital or humiliating return to his own palace, his first thoughts go out to the work that awaits him, the work that must be done."

At Malmaison, when bed-time came, "Mme. Bonaparte followed her husband to their chamber. The general got promptly into bed, and Mme. Bonaparte seated herself at the foot and read to him for a while. She was a good reader, and Bonaparte preferred her to any other. But during the daytime, what idleness was hers! Doing nothing occupied the greater portion of her time. Vainly did she change her chemise three times a day, make three separate toilettes in the day, receive visitors, go for walks in the park: she still had time upon her hands. Often she left the park, whose tranquil beauty wearied her, and—though Bonaparte objected—took Hortense with her (whose tastes agreed with her mother's) for a stroll along the dusty highroad, where they could see people and watch the carriages." Then she did a little tapestry, and tired of that. Then she took up her harp; but as she had only one tune, and played and replayed it as often as she touched the instrument, her musical exercises did not long enliven either the performer or the audience. Josephine had few real tastes, no real talents, and nothing whatever of application.

Her three chief sources of amusement at Malmaison—all ministering alike to her weakness for

spilling money—were the remaking of the park and gardens, the private theatre, and the replenishment of her wardrobe. At these occupations she was happy.

In the park and gardens she did wonderful things on a wonderful scale. She made great fishponds and filled them with strange fishes, and set swans, geese, and ducks of all kinds to swim on them. She made great glass-houses and loaded them with exotic plants and flowers. Bonaparte amused himself sometimes by firing with a carbine from his study window on the rare birds that flew over the ornamental waters. Josephine cared little what damage he did among them, provided she could go on buying more. Of the château itself she made a picture gallery, a museum, and a bric-à-brac shop. The thoughts of Bonaparte, as he sauntered here and there with her in his brief intermediate hours, must have reverted to his first lodgings in Paris and his meals in the shy restaurant at a few pence the dish. As for Josephine, disagreeables of the past had no import for her while there was money to scatter in the present.

For the evenings of the theatre at Malmaison there was usually good or sufficient company. The evenings of Sunday and Wednesday were given to this diversion; a strictly private one, when pieces were played "en famille." On Sunday there was a small dance, on Wednesday a dinner of some ceremony, and a light dramatic representation to follow. "Bonaparte and the Consulesse greatly

enjoyed these little performances. There was no lack of company; choice and varied refreshments were served in abundance; and Mme. Bonaparte did the honours of these private parties with a tact, grace, and amiability that made each guest in turn think that he or she was the favourite of the evening: every one went home pleased." Malmaison cannot have been quite so dull as Josephine pretended to Hortense, and she herself was perhaps thrice as good a hostess as she fancied.

But the extravagant pleasures of laying out Malmaison, the legitimate pleasures of gratifying her husband's guests, were trifling in comparison with the secret or semi-secret pleasures of running into debt for raiment, and anything and everything else that could be bought. This was a permanent joy, qualified by the alarms that heightened it. "Surchargée de dettes," as M. Turquan says, there was no inducing her to keep down her expenditure—and this notwithstanding her very real dread of a "scene" with Bonaparte. Her allowance might be, and usually was, exhausted: she made no account whatever of that. Tradespeople came to tempt her with all sorts of fal-lals, finery, and gewgaws; and she would go on eternally buying things of which she could never properly use the half. Pictures, bonnets, trifles for the toilet-table, curios, yards upon yards of lace, trinkets of the costliest and most useless description: Josephine could deny herself none of them. Very seldom were they paid for on the spot, but this of course was a mere post-

ponement of the inevitable day of reckoning; and as Bonaparte had a rooted horror of debt, his wife's devices to keep her extravagance as long as possible a secret from him were often comical enough. But tradesmen would not be put off for ever; the universal indebtedness of the Consulesse was both a joke and a scandal in Paris; and Bonaparte must needs hear of it.

Despite his wrath, he acted delicately in the matter, as he so often did when Josephine was concerned. To Bourrienne, and not to his wife, he went first. She must, he said, make a clean breast of it, and let him have notes in full of everything she owed. "These tradespeople were a pack of robbers; he must see all their accounts."

Bourrienne presented the request to Josephine, who was at first vastly relieved to hear that the burden of debt was to be lifted from her shoulders. No sooner, however, had she arrived at the total than her terror rose above her joy. "No!" said she to Bourrienne. "It is impossible. I can't tell him the whole amount. There will be a frightful scene. I shall halve it." Bourrienne urged the prudence and propriety of telling all. Since the general was prepared to pay, why not profit at once by his generosity? As for the "scene," that would probably have to be gone through—"for the half as for the whole." "But see," whimpered Josephine; "it is a matter of twelve hundred thousand francs, there or thereabouts. No; I shall tell him six. That will be quite enough for the present. I shall

pay the rest out of my savings." Those savings of Josephine's!

Bourrienne at last gave in. Six hundred thousands francs should be the inculpatory whole.

But Bonaparte paid the bill in handsome style, and poor reckless Josephine was redeemed. The picture dealers were satisfied, and the curio merchants, and the modistes, and the milliners, and the carriage-makers, and the saddlers, and the jewellers, and all of them. In one bill was an item of thirty-eight hats or bonnets supplied in a month, a number that seems either too many or too few. She is said sometimes to have bought six hundred dresses at a time; a laying out which recalls the words attributed to a courtesan of the Second Empire, that her wardrobe was a saving for her decent burial. She bought, by report, a tulip bulb for four thousand francs. For tulips, Josephine had no livelier an affection than for tomatoes or transcripts from the Chaldean; it was the awful charm residing in the notion that for a single bulb you could pay four thousand francs.

Bonaparte's case reversed a widespread tradition. His wife cost him more than his mistresses.

VI

But now, as Bonaparte's star ascended, Josephine began gradually to apprehend a calamity the worst that can befall a married woman. She was thirty-eight, and had borne her husband no child. He,

increasing steadily in greatness, was asking himself (as he was asked by his family) who should succeed him. This question grew in urgency when, in December of 1800, on his way to the Opera one night, he had a very narrow escape of assassination. A barrel of gunpowder placed in a cart exploded, and it is a wonder that the two carriages containing the Consular party were not hurled in pieces. More than ever vital now became the question of Heredity, and with this was closely linked the question of Divorce.

The first of the two questions was mooted in semi-privacy long before the second had begun to be generally discussed. Among the Bonapartes, who never wavered in their hostility to Josephine, it was a favourite topic; and scarcely did they hesitate to tell her to her face that she could give no heir to their brother. When she replied that she had already had children, Elisa observed: "But you were young then, my sister." Josephine, nearing thirty-nine, wept helplessly—and went again to try the virtue of the waters of Plombières. Her physician assured her that she need not yet despair, but she felt the danger thickening.

Added to this danger were the sharp pains of jealousy. It was no secret in these days to Josephine that her husband played the truant and the gallant; and though the day comes when we may almost accuse her of lending countenance to certain of his amours, it is not yet. Did she not one evening insist on Mme. de Rémusat's accom-

panying her up-stairs in order that they might surprise Bonaparte with the actress George? It was after this that he in turn insisted on occupying a room apart from his wife's. One of the ugly sides of Bonaparte's nature is occasionally displayed to us when he tries, quite in vain, to defend himself against Josephine's complaints of infidelity. He turns upon her roughly enough, acts the despot and the tyrant, and finally braves the situation out by declaring himself "a man apart from all the world," whose conduct must be measured by no common standard of behaviour. It must also, however, be remarked that these rude and cynical outbursts were of exceptional occurrence. In ordinary, Bonaparte's attitude towards Josephine was that of the affectionate, if not the doting, husband; and this attitude—his liaisons notwithstanding—contained very little of hypocrisy. Here is a letter he wrote to her at this period, while she was on one of her visits to Plombières: "I am without news of you, but I suppose you must have begun to take the waters. We are rather dull here, but your amiable daughter does the honours of the house wonderfully. For the past two days I have had something of my pain. Your big Eugène arrived yesterday, marvellously well. I love you as on the first day; you are above all things good and amiable. Hortense tells me that she has written to you many times. A thousand kind messages and a kiss of love.—Ever yours, Bonaparte."

It was not exactly true that Bonaparte loved

Josephine "as on the first day"; the fire and fury had passed out of his love, and constancy and continency had ceased; but his wife was still nearer to that strange heart than any of the light creatures he had dallied with, and he half believed that his amours did not touch his conscience. In any case he was pleased to view himself "a man apart from all the world"; and Josephine could always be reminded that the apple was bitten first by her.

But the jealousies of Josephine, at their most acute, could never expel from her mind the constant menace of divorce. Was there any force on her part by which this prevailing peril might be met? At thirty-nine, her age when Bonaparte by plebiscite was elected First Consul for life, she could have had but slender hopes of giving him a child. What if the child, the daughter, she already possessed could indirectly aid her? To heal the spirit of faction in the family, she had devised a marriage of Hortense with Lucien; in the hope that Hortense would bear a son whom Bonaparte might adopt as heir, she now arranged the marriage of Hortense and Louis. Perhaps this is putting the matter a little brusquely. Josephine, for all we can produce against her, was as fond a mother as a woman so irresponsible could be; and Louis seemed and for a while imagined that he was in love with her daughter. But, in the straits she was being daily reduced to, Josephine must have thought of this union as a very possible salvation for herself. Hortense's son, chosen by Bonaparte as his succes-

sor, might save Josephine from divorce. Hortense de Beauharnais and Louis Bonaparte were married; and on October 10, 1802, the son was born to them that Josephine had so greatly desired. But, although greatly favoured of Bonaparte, the child of Hortense and Louis, baptized Napoleon-Charles, was not to live to be Josephine's deliverer.

The Cadoudal conspiracy (followed by the execution—more properly called murder—of the Duc d'Enghien) thrust Bonaparte nearer to the steps of the throne. The great schemer, "mirror of all martial men," whose fame was beginning to fill the world with its report, was about to bind upon his brow "the golden circlet of sovereignty." "You have raised us up out of the past," said the Senate. "Through you we feel and bless the benefits of the present; give us now a guarantee for the future. Finish your work, great man, and make it immortal like your glory!"

The plebiscite to which was submitted the proposal for an Imperium "by an overwhelming majority gave expression to the assent of France to Napoleon's policy"; and on the 18th of May, 1804 (28th Floréal, year xii), Napoleon Bonaparte was the first man in the realm. Cambacérès, president and spokesman of the Senators, proclaimed him "Emperor of the French." Then the Senate proceeded to the apartment of Josephine, who in her turn was proclaimed Empress.

"Fame," said Cambacérès to her, "sends abroad the tidings of your good works, which are without

end. She publishes that you, ever accessible to the wretched, employ your influence with the chief of the State only to relieve their misery; she tells how to the pleasure of conferring an obligation you add a sweet delicacy that makes gratitude the more grateful, a good deed the more precious. . . . The Senate is happy in being the first to greet your Imperial Majesty, and he who has the honour to speak for it ventures to hope that you will reckon him among your most faithful servitors."

The Imperial dignity "was declared hereditary in the direct, natural, legitimate, and adoptive descent of Napoleon, and in the direct, natural, and legitimate descent of Joseph Bonaparte and Louis Bonaparte." It was, of course, the childlessness of Josephine that placed Napoleon under the necessity of naming his brothers Joseph and Louis. To them he looked as the hope of the new dynasty. On the Emperor was lavished a civil list of a million sterling (exactly the same sum, Lenz observes, as the Constituent Assembly had fixed for the reformed monarchy); new dignities and offices of State were created, and an Imperial court. The Coronation completed the famous work. Here also "a harmony with the traditions of Carlovingian times was preserved, by the invitation which Napoleon sent to the Pope, asking him to come across the Alps and give him consecration with the holy oil. Pius VII came. Like Pope Stephen of old, his successor crossed the Alps to consecrate this new Frankish dynasty with the solemn words

of the Church." Napoleon himself, as we know, took from the altar the crown of golden laurel leaves, "fit symbol of a power based upon victory," and with his own hands placed it on his head, and then with his own hands set her crown on the head of Josephine.

Two days before this august ceremony the Emperor and Josephine were married—for the second time. The first marriage had been a mere civil contract; the Church's sanction of the union had never been obtained. The Pope, learning this, learning that Josephine in the eyes of the Church was not a legitimate wife at all, had promptly declared that he would take no part in the service of the Coronation. This was a hint amounting to a Papal mandate, and Napoleon had not the least choice but to obey it. The religious marriage, therefore, took place in the chapel of the Tuileries on the night of November 30th. Cardinal Fesch, Napoleon's uncle, performed the ceremony, which was witnessed only by Talleyrand and Marshal Berthier. "A profound secrecy was observed; but the requirements of Pope Pius were satisfied."

And now at last Josephine might surely think that she had shot beyond the danger zone! She had been solemnly wedded at the altar. She had been crowned in Notre Dame with Napoleon. The Coronation was, beyond question, a signal and most significant honour for her. M. Masson has dwelt upon the fact that the coronation (joined with the consecration) had no connection whatever with

politics. It was an act dictated by sentiment on the part of the Emperor; it expressed all his regard for the wife who had journeyed with him from the Rue Chantereine to the Luxembourg and the Tuileries. Since Marie de' Medici, second wife of Henri IV, no Queen of France had received the combined honour of coronation and consecration; "and not even she at the same time as her husband." This fine piece of sentiment, as Mr. Sergeant says, "was manifested in little more than a year after the period when he was supposed to be growing tired of her, and might well have been taken to prove the falsity of such suggestions." On the whole, the Empress must have entered on the splendours of her new existence with a feeling of confidence such as the Consulesse had seldom known.

To be sure, the splendours of the new existence were not indefectible. A Court is a Court, and tedium will dwell there; it is a Court, and suffers from restraints. When a great public show was to be organized, Napoleon could do perfectly all that was necessary for the dazzlement of a crowd; but in the art of amusing his guests he was a very indifferent hand. As for the restraints of his Court, it was often said that he himself was the only person who enjoyed any freedom there.

At Malmaison, Josephine, in the lazy way that was her natural way, could always make some lazy pastimes; but during the five years and a half that she shared the throne with Napoleon she spent at this retreat not more than seven or eight months.

She was at the Tuileries, off and on, for about a year. She visited Saint-Cloud, Fontainebleau, and Rambouillet. She had, in a word, during her reign as Empress, no real home. At Malmaison she could always provide herself with amusement of some kind, but she breathed her happiest in Paris, and from the summer solstice she must have turned eagerly to the winter season there.

No doubt at first she derived some entertainment from her position as mistress of a numerous and very ornamental staff of attendants: her Lady of Honour, her Lady of the Bedchamber, her Palace Ladies, her Chamberlains, her Equerries, her Grand Almoner, and her Secretary (the working staff was probably thrice as numerous); and she still had the daily cheer of a toilet three hours long; dressing and rougeing and powdering herself. More than occasionally, however, her Majesty was "dull as a beetle"—who is perhaps never dull. It is little surprising. Josephine was a woman poor in intellect and imagination, and with no remarkable endowment of vitality. Her mental resources were of the slenderest kind; a well-filled purse of which the strings were ever open was her chief pleasure during the middle period of life.

She writes from Saint-Cloud to her daughter Hortense: "Since your departure I have been constantly ill, melancholy, wretched. I have even had to keep my bed, with some feverish attack. The illness has left me, but the grief remains. How could I help grieving, separated from a sweet

and loving daughter who makes the joy of my life!"

To be occasionally bored is one thing; to be perpetually suspicious of the gallantries of a husband is another and a worse thing. From the very beginning of the imperial era the Empress was made jealous with good cause. Her rivals lurked in many places; at the Court, in society, on the stage. At the Tuileries the Emperor had what may be called a bachelor's den, approached by a secret staircase; and one can fancy how the imperial consort would regard this lair of Bluebeard.

Curiously, it was in these very days that she first began to display what looks like warm affection for the intriguing gallant of a husband. Napoleon starts for the campaign against Prussia and Russia, and at Mayence takes leave of Josephine. Scarcely will she be parted from him, falls weeping on his breast, clings to him, until Napoleon himself is sobbing with her. She might almost have had some prescient feeling of a certain happening of this campaign; for was it not to cast Napoleon into the arms of Walewska? Small wonder that by and by we find him inventing manifold excuses to stay her from coming to the seat of war!

The letters of Napoleon during this campaign are in marked contrast with the Italian series. Now and then we get an ardent phrase, and the tone is seldom other than affectionate; but there is no rage of love or jealousy in them, the lava-flow of the epistles from Italy has chilled. Some breath of

the amour with the siren Pole—in which all the erotic Corsican suddenly flames again in Napoleon—must have been wafted to Josephine, for we read by implication in his answers to her that she is restlessly anxious to be where he is.

"All these pretty Poles are French at heart," Napoleon writes (from Posen, December 2, 1806); "but there is only one woman for me. Do you know who she is? I could paint a very good picture of her, but I should have to flatter it too much for you to recognize her. . . . How long these nights are, all alone." Eight days later: "I love you and long for you greatly." January 3, 1807: "Your grief oppresses me, but one must submit to events. It is too wide a country for you to travel between Mayence and Warsaw." The same week: "Think that it costs me more than you to put off for a few weeks the happiness of seeing you: events and the success of my enterprise will have it so." The week following: "The distance is too great for me to allow you to come so far at this time of year. I am in splendid health, rather wearied sometimes by the length of the nights." January 18: "I am very well, and I love you much; but if you are always crying I shall think you have neither courage nor character. I do not love cowards, and an empress should be brave." January 23: "It is out of the question for women to make such a journey as this. . . . Return to Paris; be happy and contented there. I myself may be there before very long. I was amused at your saying that you had taken

a husband in order to be with him. In my ignorance I fancied that the wife was made for the husband, the husband for his country, his family and glory. Forgive my ignorance; one is always learning something from the fair sex. Good-bye, dear. Think what it costs me not to send for you. Say to yourself, 'This proves to me how precious I am to him.'" All this would be pretty enough did we not remember that it was but a few days since he had written to the young Countess Walewska: "I saw only you, I admired only you, I desire only you. Answer immediately, and calm the impatient ardour of—N" —but a few evenings since he had said to her: "You need not fear the eagle; he claims over you no power but that of a passionate love, a love that will content itself with nothing less than your whole heart."

The last letter but one of this series to Josephine was written from Tilsit in July, just after the conclusion of that treaty which was so humbling to Prussia. "The Queen of Prussia is truly charming; she overflows with coquetry for me, but you need not be jealous. I am an oil-cloth—it all glides over me. It would be too costly to me to play the lover." He had played it easily enough in seducing the girlish Marie Walewska!

Meanwhile there had been a domestic tragedy, and one which for Josephine was full of dreadful omen. On May 5, 1807, died the first child of Hortense and Louis Bonaparte. An attack of croup had carried off the little Napoleon-Charles.

Grief turned the poor mother almost to flint, Josephine was distracted, and the Emperor deeply moved. He wrote: "I realize to the full the sorrow which the death of our poor Napoleon must cause you. You can guess what I, too, am suffering. I wish I were with you, that I might try to keep your grief within moderate bounds. You have had the happiness never to lose a child, but it is among the conditions and trials inseparable from our lot in this world. I beg you to let me hear that you have been reasonable and are keeping well. Would you add to my sorrow?"

Alas! Josephine could not but feel that for her the death of the boy prince was or might be something more than a bereavement. It brought nearer to her the possibility of divorce. Napoleon had wished to adopt his brother's child, had built on this child his plans for the succession; the ever-jealous Louis had refused the offer. Plans for the succession had now become more than ever difficult, inasmuch as Napoleon had bestowed on his brothers Joseph and Louis the crowns of foreign countries; and, as Lenz says, "it was hardly conceivable that either of them could unite in his person a foreign crown and that of the French Empire. . . . And the brothers of Napoleon counted for less in this matter of the succession, because they had disappointed the hopes he had raised of their co-operation in his work."

There was something besides all this for Josephine to brood over. A few months before the death of

Napoleon-Charles, there had been born to the Emperor (December 13, 1806) a child to whom the name of Léon had been given, the fruit of a liaison with the beautiful girl Eléonore Denuelle. The birth of this child was known to Josephine, who knew also that Napoleon could now say to her, "You see, it is your fault that I have no legitimate heir!"

But the unfaithful husband did not cease to love the wife he had now so many times betrayed; the Emperor, conscious of the advantages of divorce from the standpoint of the reason of State, clung to the consort he had crowned, the woman who had wound herself about his heart. Again and again we read that "his passion for Madame Walewska had shaken his affection for Josephine." This in a measure is true enough; but for a long while before this date Napoleon had merely pretended to be the lover of his wife—in the sense, that is to say, in which the poet speaks of "sublunary lovers' love." What is significant is, that although Napoleon himself began seriously to ponder the question of divorce, and to take counsel on it, immediately after his return from Tilsit, he was two full years in accomplishing the step. Not for nothing did that swift, decisive man dally for two years with a scheme of any sort. What kept the scheme of divorce two years upon its course was Napoleon's profound sentimental reluctance to part from Josephine.

Two curious years these are. The graceful tears

of Josephine bedew them plentifully; the "funerall teares" of a divining heart. She weeps, pleads, protests, and is sometimes as nearly defiant as a soft, indolent, and yielding nature will let her be. She shows by turns a plaintive dignity in answering Napoleon and a pathetic want of it in her readiness to go behind his back and abuse him to the people of her household, to ministers, to any one. Napoleon, on his part, mixes tears with argument, caresses with reasons of State, cajoleries with appeals to the needs of France and the imperious calls of his destiny. Ministers ply the unfortunate woman with motives for self-sacrifice, are sent packing by her, and are then trounced by Napoleon—who had given them their cue.

But Josephine's battle—doubtful as the issue repeatedly seemed—was in truth from the first a lost one. We behold it finally spent at the family council held at the Tuileries on the night of December 15, 1809. Josephine's eyes were tear-swollen, but it is agreed that the poor lady had schooled herself to a very queen-like composure. Napoleon's emotion was plain to all within the circle. In the course of the brief speech which he substituted for the one that had been prepared for him, the Emperor said of the wife he was divorcing from him: "She has adorned fifteen years of my life, and the memory of these years will never quit my heart. She was crowned by my own hand. I desire that she retain the rank and title of crowned Empress, but above all that she never doubt my

feelings and that she retain me always as her best and dearest friend."

For Josephine, too, a set speech had been prepared, but we incline to think that the words she used (they were in her own handwriting and on her own paper) had either been penned by herself or adapted by her from the document she had received.

"With the leave of our august and dear spouse," she said, "I declare that, since I am without the hope of bearing children to satisfy the requirements of his policy and the interests of France, it is my pleasure to afford him the highest proof ever yet given of my attachment and devotion." This brief exordium reached, the unhappy woman gave way, sobbing audibly. Regnauld de Saint-Jean d'Angély, Secretary of State to the Imperial Household, took the paper from her, and read it to the end. "To his bounty I owe everything. His was the hand that crowned me, and while on the throne I have received from the French people nothing but testimonies of affection. I recognize this, I think, in agreeing to the dissolution of a marriage which has now become a hindrance to the welfare of France. . . . But the dissolution of my marriage will not change my heart. The Emperor will always find in me his truest friend. I know how sorely this act, which his policy and great interests render necessary, has hurt his heart; but we shall both win glory from the sacrifice we consent to for our country's sake."

These words, if they were Josephine's own, became her well. The whole circle was visibly distressed. During the reading by Regnauld the Empress, outwardly calm, carried her handkerchief several times to her eyes; the grief of Hortense, seated behind her mother, was more audible; and the son Eugène, Viceroy of Italy, supporting himself with difficulty from the opening of the scene, fell in a swoon when the speech was ended. The termination of the ceremony was a huge relief for every one. But before the night was over, Napoleon had yet another shock. He had retired to his room and to bed. Suddenly at the door of the chamber appeared Josephine, dishevelled, weeping, "her eyes strangely fixed." After a moment's pause, "she advanced towards Napoleon's bed, moving like an automaton. At the bedside she sank forward, and folding the Emperor in her arms, let her loud lamentations take their course." Napoleon was an hour in bringing her round. After what had just passed at the family council he could give her no promise but that of friendship, and with this she was at last persuaded to leave him.

On the following morning it was announced to the Senate that the Emperor and Empress were jointly agreed to sever their bonds of wedlock. The resolutions of the family council were presented by Count Lacépède, who said: "To-day more than ever the Emperor has shown that he desires to reign solely that he may serve his subjects, and has shown,

too, how well the Empress deserves that posterity should associate her name with Napoleon's." Lacépède bade the Senate remember that no fewer than thirteen of the predecessors of Napoleon had broken the chains of matrimony the better to discharge the duties of sovereign, and that "among these were the most admired and beloved of French monarchs —Charlemagne, Philip Augustus, Louis XII, and Henri IV."

By Committee of the Senate it was decreed that:—

"(1) The marriage contracted between the Emperor Napoleon and the Empress Josephine is dissolved.

"(2) The Empress Josephine will retain the titles and rank of a crowned Empress-Queen.[1]

"(3) Her jointure is fixed at an annual revenue of £80,000 from the public treasury.

"(4) Every provision which may be made by the Emperor in favour of the Empress Josephine, out of the funds of the Civil List, shall be obligatory on his successors."

In their address to the Empress the Senate said: "Your Imperial and Royal Majesty is about to make for France the greatest of sacrifices. History will for ever preserve the memory of it. The august spouse of the greatest of monarchs cannot by more heroic devotion be joined to his immortal

[1] It has been noted: "This clause gives considerable trouble to Lacépède and Regnauld. They cannot even find a precedent whether, if they met, Josephine or Marie Louise would take precedence."

memory. The French people, Madame, has long revered your virtues. It holds dear that loving-kindness which inspires your every word, as it directs your every action. It will admire your sublime devotion. It will for ever award to your Majesty, Empress and Queen, the homage of gratitude, respect, and love."

In the very hour of parting from her, Napoleon was once again to be reminded that his enchantress had cost him dear. Once again had he to lift from those fond shoulders a crushing weight of debt. One hundred and twenty "creditors severe" presented themselves, with claims in the neighbourhood of two million francs. And once again Napoleon sealed up this avenue of woes, giving Josephine to know that he would

Pay every debt, as if God wrote the bill.

Not that he paid every debt in full. He knew Josephine's tradesmen, the large simplicity of their ways with her, and the large simplicity of her confidence in them. In cheating these tradesmen somewhat he probably gave them somewhat above their due. This at least shall be hoped, for a fair half-million was knocked off the total. There were one hundred and twenty thousand francs to a lace dealer, and above five hundred thousand francs to jewellers. Josephine could have rubbed the virtue out of Aladdin's lamp!

IV

'THE QUEEN OF THE EAST'

Who, after his marriage with Josephine, was the first woman to share an amorous episode with Bonaparte? Her time was not in those early days of glamour; of this, conviction seems to come unhalting. There could have been no room for inroads, on his lightest emotions even, during his first separation from the wife, older than himself, with whom he had spent an ardent honeymoon of two days, before the military necessities of Italy called him to the camp. The *aura* of the new existence clung to him, it pervaded the lines of battle. The portrait of Josephine was in his hand, it was thrust upon the attention of every comer; in any lesser man *niaiserie* would have been discovered by the officers whom he buttonholed and into whose ears he poured the glowing stream of description of the new wife; there could have been no corner in his existence for any other *voyageuse à Cythère*. While every spare moment was filled with the writing of letters in burning strain to the absent bride, no other could have had the chance of being even the accomplice of those merely sensual flares which rose and died out in a few days, or even in as many hours, in the later life of Napoleon, First Consul and Emperor.

"I kiss you on the lips—I kiss you on the heart"; such outpourings and many more were lavished on the absent one. Poverty had combined with military discipline to avert most episodes of the merely venal kind. Bonaparte was only twenty-seven when he became a husband, and the feminine desire to throw itself at the feet of the conqueror and the sovereign could only beat unheeded on the barriers guarded by another image.

Thus there seems to be a gap of some three years before any affair of importance in the feminine cosmos is recorded. Bonaparte had gone down into Egypt, on a mission regarded by certain of the Powers as vague and somewhat suspicious. To humble England was the aim alleged of him by some. Egypt was doubtless the keyhole of the East and of the Indies; Bonaparte may well have hankered for the turning of the key; it was, besides, or so ran fable, a land of treasure, treasure lying loose for the picking. We have heard the same legend of the streets of London the Relentless, and of many an Eldorado. "Egypt is a very different country in reality from the written descriptions of it," said the general-in-chief himself.

Josephine, as we have seen, did not go down into Egypt.

Bonaparte, meanwhile, had there fallen in with one who was to provide him with a feminine experiment of some standing. He was, we may think, on the scent of an adventure in the intervals of his admiration of the Pyramids, to him one of

the most stupendous impressions of his life; for he had caused a bevy of Asiatic beauties to be brought to his quarters at Cairo, that he might inspect for himself their loudly-vaunted charms. But their figures and their corpulence, so esteemed by the Oriental male, had no value for the European general. He soon bundled them off. Not long, however, had he to wait for a more delectable specimen of femininity. Riding one day with his staff in the neighbourhood of Cairo, Bonaparte had to draw rein to allow of the passage of a party of travellers mounted upon the Arab donkeys of those parts. His ready eye picked out among the riders a young woman with a piquant and vivacious expression. This was Pauline Fourès, wife of an officer of reserves, then on service in Egypt. This young traveller, a native of provincial France, the offspring of a *mésalliance*, had lived her quiet life blameless as a work-girl in a little country town. Pretty from her childhood, "Bélilotte," as she was nicknamed, had attracted the notice of a worthy man of the middle class, the son of a retired tradesman of the same neighbourhood. He married her, and at the call for reserves for duty in the Egyptian campaign, he took his wife with him to that country. Fair, with the fresh rose colouring of a school-girl, and sparkling with vivacity, the young wife met the party of the general. Light-heartedly enjoying her donkey-ride, she happened on the fateful hour. Bonaparte said nothing of his impressions at the moment, but at once contrived a plan for seeing

something more of the gay rider. There was, however, nothing indicative of his connivance in the invitation received next day by Madame Fourès to dine with General Dupuy, the military commandant of Cairo. Some lady, either a relative or a useful friend, was accustomed to play hostess for the general when he entertained ladies of correctitude. So the young wife took things as being *en règle*, when the commandant and this "manière de Madame Dupuy" requested her company. Fourès, alone, was puzzled that his wife should be invited without him.

"For, after all, I am certainly an officer," remarked the Lieutenant of Chasseurs with some huffiness. However, he allowed his wife to go, only, with a vague sentiment of jealousy, enjoining her to let every one know that she was a married woman.

The little dinner went off very well. The lieutenant's young wife was offered every attention. There was, says the chronicler, nothing that could have given her the slightest suspicion as to coming events. Dinner was over, the guests were at the stage of dessert, and the coffee was just arriving, when sounds were heard in the house, the folding doors were thrown open with energy, and between them appeared the commander-in-chief. Dupuy, apologizing for being still at table, asked General Bonaparte to take at least a cup of coffee with them. The general accepted and sat down, and before us arises the picture of the scene. Silently sipping the cup, the man of whom a world had begun to talk,

fixed a steady gaze on the young guest, who, blushing at the obvious attention of the great man, cast down her eyes in silent confusion. She had not even the relief of passing off her embarrassment in light chatter. Bonaparte ate an orange and drank his coffee, but spoke not a single word to Madame Fourès all the while that his eyes, suffused perhaps with that velvet mist which visited them when bent upon an object of desire, swept every line of her form. Then he rose and took his leave. We are told of a ruse by which Napoleon contrived an immediate assignation with Pauline—the intentional overturning of a cup of coffee (or, according to another account, of iced water) upon the lady's dress.

In the days of the second king of Israel a certain warrior-husband had been found *de trop*. To him, by royal mandate, was assigned the fearful glory of fighting in the front ranks of the Chosen People against their enemies. The simple savagery of Israel was, on the eve of the nineteenth century, replaced by a far finer and more subtle scheme. Fourès must be removed, that he might not interfere with his commander's gallantries. General Berthier stands for Joab in the tale. He was chief-of-staff in Egypt during the campaign. A few days after the momentous dinner, Fourès was summoned before him. "My dear fellow," said Berthier, "you are the luckiest of the lot; you are to see France once more! Such is the confidence reposed in you by the commander-in-chief that he is sending you to

Europe to carry dispatches for the Directory; you are to leave in an hour's time. I only wish I were in your shoes!"

With these words he handed to the astonished Fourès a bulky package.

"I must go . . . and warn my wife . . . to pack up," stammered Fourès, at length finding his tongue after the stunning effect of a favour which instinct whispered to him was of a very dubious quality.

"Your wife!" exclaimed Berthier; "your wife! Why, you must be crazy! For one thing, she would be horribly ill on a small vessel, badly victualled, and which may have to face some risks—besides, it would never be allowed. To be sure, I can quite understand, my friend, that you must feel the separation from a wife whom you love."

And here, says the story-teller, a little imaginatively, Berthier fell to sighing and to gnawing such fragments of his nails as the habit had left him.

Human vanity triumphed at length over astonishment and distrust. After all, reflected the lieutenant, he did possess qualifications which fitted him for the honour of selection, and these were explanation enough of the commander's choice of him. But Pauline, who had divined Bonaparte's reasons a good deal better than her husband, bade him farewell "with a tear in one eye and a smile in the other." And Fourès sailed away.

But there was many a slip in those days 'twixt setting sail and landing in France; for the English scoured the Mediterranean, and many vessels fell

into their hands. The *Pomona,* in which Josephine had once journeyed from Martinique to France, was one of the prizes—the little craft in which Fourès had embarked was another. The contingency was one not unforeseen by those at head-quarters. Stripped to the very shirt in the search for secret dispatches, Fourès stood before the English naval commander. Nothing was found on him but some documents which, as the Englishman recalled, had already done service—they had indeed been reproduced in an official print in Paris some time before. But now, how to dispose of Fourès? Let us hear the Duchesse d'Abrantès's own account, for its piquancy is inimitable.

"The English captain, a man, be it said, most polished and urbane, asked the ambassador-lieutenant where he would like to be put ashore. They were sailing, he explained, for Mahon, thence to the Moluccas, and after that for a pretty big cruise in the Pacific; towards the Pole even it might be; everything depended upon what sailing orders were awaiting him at Macao; after all this they would probably be returning to the Nile. If then the lieutenant cared to accept a lodging on board during their little expedition, he, a captain in H.B.M.'s service, was entirely at his orders. Foor Fourès, who thought as he listened to all these geographical names that they were talking of the realms of savagery unexplored and awful, asked hesitatingly if it would not be feasible for him to return whence he came. For he preferred to tackle all the ser-

pents of old Nile to facing Chinamen and the Spice Islands.

"'Observe, too,' he suggested discreetly, 'now that I am nothing but an empty dispatch-box, what is the use of dragging me about the world, far from my wife? Let us put back to Cairo.'

"Unlucky fellow! for at Cairo he was fated to discover that it is not only in the Nile that crocodiles are to be found!

"Now the English commander was, as it happened, just as well posted in the internal affairs of Egypt as if he had himself been stationed in Cairo and Alexandria.

"He knew quite enough of the episode of the commander-in-chief and Madame Fourès to feel overjoyed at being able to engineer such a striking effect in the little comedy which was being enacted, and in which the husband who had been sent a-travelling was now about to perform a rôle which had not appeared on the programme nor figured in the *mise-en-scène.* And so with the utmost courtesy and with apparent cordiality he landed the worthy lieutenant upon Egyptian territory—and wished him good luck."

Poor Fourès hastened to the arms of the lively Pauline, only to find the nest empty, the bird flown. It was not long before he discovered her whereabouts in a lodging close to the quarters of the commander-in-chief. Bonaparte and Pauline had spent the time of Fourès' absence very satisfactorily from their own point of view. The young French-

woman's natural gifts, aided by acquired embellishments, had rendered her a delightful companion to the general, a man in the fulness of his vitality and separated at the time from women of any charm or brilliancy. Her beauty and her ingenuous surrender of herself to his desires made Pauline an accomplice after his own heart in the hours of pleasure which were spared from his conduct of military affairs.

Upon this glowing picture was cast the shadow of the unexpected husband. Anger and embarrassment must certainly have seized upon the pair. Upon the unhappy Fourès the blow fell heavily; he cried his wrongs and his distress for all to hear. A few of the onlookers were touched, it is true, by his misery, but they could not interfere. His turbulence did not retrieve for him the erring "Bélilotte"; he got merely a divorce, valid under the local administration, which led, as we shall see, to further complications at a later date.

Pauline's day-dream was soon to finish. The intimacy she must have enjoyed with Napoleon is evidenced by the fact that she was the one outsider to whom he confided his approaching departure from Egypt. This, no doubt, was one of those weaknesses which are in the experience of Samson, and for which Napoleon would lash himself in retrospect. Still, he went no farther; Pauline was made to understand that she could not be his travelling companion. Tearfully, she declared herself prepared to face all danger in her hero's com-

pany. It was not, however, of her, but of his own reputation, that the general in the hour of parting thought first. The English might capture him: think of the scandal were she found aboard! Mrs. Grundy doubtless was a power to be reckoned with even by a Bonaparte.

Besides, Pauline had not fulfilled her mission—the greatest of all feminine accomplishments. Josephine, stung by the reflections upon her sterility, had retaliated with counter-charges; the failure might be on the other side, she retorted, and the waspish words had stabbed Bonaparte almost into conviction. Pauline might have made the accusation void, but she failed. "*La petite sotte!* she could not even bear a child," was his conviction in an outburst of irritation.

With sad fortitude, Madame Fourès accepted the situation. It was indeed a sore one. Here was she left in Egypt, now to her a boundless waste, poignantly remarks Madame d'Abrantès. There was her husband, still raving with jealousy and undestroyed devotion; while General Kléber, who had been commanded by Bonaparte to arrange as soon as possible for her departure with others who were returning to France, showed towards her traits inconceivably paltry in a man of such stature and such a fine appearance. He gave his energies to heckling the mistress of his general, and spared no pains to cut her off from such acquaintances as remained to her in the hour of disorder. When General Junot returned to Paris, Napoleon, white

with rage, listened to his account of Kléber's persecution. Moved he was by anger, and by a half-born fear that Kléber might have gained for himself the place of his master. At last, however, Madame Fourès secured the necessary passport, and got to Paris. Here she found her idol as First Consul, more than ever glorious and desirable. But the glamorous days of Egypt were gone by for ever. The differences with his wife had just been patched up, and Bonaparte was in a cautious mood. He would not allow Pauline Fourès to establish herself in the capital, but indicated to her a retreat in the neighbourhood, and to this the saddened woman retired. From time to time she showed herself in public, and it was at the opera that the Duchesse d'Abrantès, then a young married woman, first saw the "Queen of the East," for so the generals of Napoleon had named Pauline. Fair-haired and rosy as a school-girl of sixteen, Madame Fourès, in a splendid shawl of white embroidered cashmere, dawned on the sight of her chronicler.

Poor Pauline! if she had strayed she suffered sorely for it; a fresh chapter of harassment opened for her when her husband returned at length from Egypt. He was still infatuated with the woman he had married. Profiting by irregularity in the divorce, which had not been confirmed in France as was obligatory, he beset Pauline with the utmost urgency, begging, threatening, moving things high and low in his efforts to obtain her return. The

clamour of the affair was intensely irksome to Bonaparte, for whom Madame Fourès was becoming an affair of the past, and who was, moreover, at the time in the culminating moment of his life-Consulship. With some asperity, he pointed out to the young woman that the divorce had been pronounced; in spite of quibbles of the law, Fourès and Pauline had been unmated. The simplest way out of the difficulty, he declared, would be the marriage of Pauline to a fresh husband. He indicated the worthy holder of a post in the consular service, and Pauline immolated herself. She regarded as paramount the wishes and the convenience of the lover who had grown cold; married the consular gentleman, and retired into oblivion. Yet she did not forget, and in the days of the captivity of St. Helena her love displayed itself once more in pathetic efforts to sever the shackles of the lion.

Such is the charming sentimentality of the Duchesse d'Abrantès's story. M. Frederic Masson pours a little cold water over it. "Bélilotte," he says, went to Brazil in company with a retired officer of the Guards named Ballard, and scrupulously denied all interest in the Emperor, lest she should fall a victim to the suspicion of the police who were already keeping an eye upon her as "an old friend of Bonaparte." The lady even assumed another name that she might more certainly retire into oblivion. She lived to be old, but kept her relations with the "Man of Destiny" in the secret hoard of her pos-

sessions. He had written her many letters, which a world would gloat over to-day. She afforded no chance to the one or to the other: the unknown outpourings of the hero, whatever they may have been, were muted by the flames.

V

THE SINGER OF MILAN

"ITALIANS," said Napoleon dictatorially, "are the only people that can produce opera." In other words, it was Italy that gave to the conqueror the music he delighted in. English music he declared vile, the worst in the world; the melody of "Ye Banks and Braes" could not have been so charming had it been English, he declared to the little islander of St. Helena, who with her childish pipe sang to him in the land of his captivity. The music of France was little better.

Italy gave all things: the melody and the composer, as well as the singer whose utterance, "yearning like a god in pain," was to hold the ear of Europe—Giuseppina Grassini, who, not least of all, was to be mistress to the deliverer of Italy.

Grassini may well have had the lark for her earliest rival, for the father of the singer was *un simple cultivateur*, a Lombard peasant. The daughter of the soil early displayed a golden voice, and having attracted the notice of a certain General Belgioso, received professional training at his expense. Giuseppina (she called herself Josephine during her operatic reign in France) was under thirty at the time of Marengo, and was, with the tenor

Marchesi, chosen to hymn the pæan of victory at Milan in the spring of 1800. She presented to her generation the bundle of contradictions which are the artistic temperament. Her personal appearance formed an astonishing contrast to her style of dress and to her speech. Her features, cast in a grand and tragic mould, reminded an English *raconteur* of those of her relative Giulia Grisi. Dark-haired, with strongly-marked eyebrows, and the opulent lines of the cantatrice, she turned on all men a gaze which seemed fraught with deeps of amorous inclination. Yet her attentions were most unflatteringly evanescent, her emotions cooled within the hour. We must not even take too seriously Grassini's own rhapsodies poured out to Bonaparte himself. The singer, in her earliest bloom at La Scala, had thrown herself at the young Corsican general, then first dawning in Italy.

"Then," said Grassini, "I was in the full splendour of my beauty and my talents. There was no talk of any but myself in the *Vergine del Sole.* I alone drew every eye, inflamed all hearts. The youthful general alone was cold, yet he alone enthralled me. How strange, how seldom found! When I really was worth something, when all Italy was at my feet, and I was spurning her in high-flown fashion for one of your glances, I failed to win one, and now behold! you bend them on me who am unworthy of your pains; no longer do I merit your condescension."

All this may be a little histrionic; in any case

Grassini had her triumph, if a deferred one. But when? There is confusion on the point, arising from the discrepancy between the reminiscences of Napoleon himself and of the other witnesses of his relations with the great contralto. Bourrienne falls foul of Napoleon's own reminiscences, believing that he wilfully misrepresented the date of the liaison. Yet to what end could Napoleon have wilfully perverted dates in a matter of such small historical import? Bourrienne himself is by no means faultless on points of exactitude. Napoleon's blunder in placing the beginning of his intimacy with Grassini at the Italian coronation of 1805 was probably quite innocent. To begin with, the allusion to the incident was in one of his St. Helena retrospects. Even before the final breakdown of his health there were preliminary stages in which his memory had taken on the senile characteristic of recalling best the substance stored earliest in the brain-cells. Then we know not how much was due to the editing of the little band who wrote at his dictation. Indeed to Napoleon, in a retrospect so thick with event, so dazzling with glory, a few of the films of the biograph may well have been misplaced. The keen edge of triumph, had it not rather been in the day of Marengo than in the apex of sovereignty, after all? As for Grassini's hankering for a glance from the hero, is it not much more likely that when she yearned in vain it was in those days of '96 when young Bonaparte had eyes for Josephine alone? There is evidence

enough to place the amour in 1800. At the fêtes at Milan which celebrated the triumph of Marengo Napoleon heard with enthusiasm that thrilling voice. The soft fulness of the glorious contralto tones enthralled him; they transported him to the very peak of emotional ferment, and sending for the singer "he found her in no way cruel; in a few hours' time the victor of Marengo had added to his conquests." Next morning the lady breakfasted with Napoleon and General Berthier, and Napoleon was fixed in his intention of securing her for the national fêtes in Paris on July 14. Bourrienne recalls the orders he received to attend to the financial side of the affair, and to arrange the transit of the star, and of a fellow artiste, Bianchi, to the French capital. And there is a still more detailed touch in reference to the question of chronology. "When Napoleon was awakened with the news of the capitulation of Genoa, in the same year, the slumbers of Madame Grassini were disturbed at the same time."

And now Grassini sang to France as she had sung to Italy. There, on the anniversary of the republic on the 25th Messidor, an viii, did the Italian singers at the Invalides hail the victor, and hymn the liberation of Italy, in a poem specially composed for the event by Bonaparte's commands. Three orchestras united to make the musical occasion a peerless one. Berlioz himself scarcely surpassed an undertaking so colossal. Italian music had her triumph in the great acclaim.

Grassini had her reign in Paris. As to her adventure with Napoleon, the artistic temperament and feminine imperiousness conspired together to cut it short. The First Consul had no idea of languishing at the singer's feet. He soon made her understand that at the best she was to consider herself as placed within a niche indeed, but one in which she was not to expect too frequent adoration. Captious and exacting, like other of the "daughters of musick," Giuseppina pouted and rebelled, then launched on open treason. For Rode the violinist understood better than the First Consul how to play upon the strings of temperament; he failed not to burn incense and to lavish the *petits soins*, which, after all, tell with many women far more than the occasional instance of a hero's softness.

As a queen of song, Grassini triumphed too in England and in Russia. At her *début* at the Royal Opera House in the Haymarket she did, it is true, meet with some obstacles. Popular devotion at the time was with the soprano Mrs. Billington, the favourite of a royal duke. Grassini's opportunity came with one great duet in the opera *Il Ratto di Proserpina*, specially composed to give full opportunity to the glorious notes of her register. Together she and Mrs. Billington sang in the duet, and together they received an ovation.

Over the real merits of Grassini's voice and style there has been much dispute. Fétis, the French composer and critic, heard her with rapture. The writer of the Grassini article in Grove's *Dictionary*

of Music directs attention to the opinion of Lord Mount-Edgcumbe, a musical dilettant of the time. Referring to this amateur's own writings we find him speaking of Grassini in somewhat disparaging terms. "She had but one good octave," he avers. Others dilate upon the sopranic flexibility which she added to her gift of contralto quality.

For a conviction of the wondrous quality of Grassini's voice and powers let us hear De Quincey. "Her voice," declares the Opium-Eater, "(the richest of *contraltos*) was delightful to me beyond all that I had ever heard. Yes; or have since heard; or ever shall hear . . . thrilling was the pleasure with which almost always I heard this angelic Grassini. Shivering with expectation I sat, when the time drew near for her golden epiphany; shivering I rose from my seat, incapable of rest, when that heavenly and harp-like voice sang its own victorious welcome in its *Threttánelo*. . . . This same Grassini, whom once I adored, afterwards when gorged with English gold, went off to Paris; and when I heard on what terms she lived with a man so unmagnanimous as Napoleon, I came to hate her."

Grassini's social triumphs were considerable, though gossip again depicts her *allure* as somewhat *bizarre*. With her tragic grandeur of feature was allied a freedom of speech absolutely grotesque in association. Her sayings had not the fineness of wit, they provoked laughter simply by their astounding baldness and the strong Italian accent with

which the speaker rolled out both French and broken English. Her *mot* on the decoration of the alto singer Crescentini need not be repeated here.

In her dress, Grassini had the tastes of a gipsy. Every colour of the rainbow appeared together without the slightest taste in blending; her appearance was indeed "that of a strolling actress equipped in Ragfair."

She was a fine actress, thinks Lord Mount-Edgcumbe. He, too, is kinder with regard to her outward demeanour than is the *viveur* quoted above.

"She was fêted, caressed and introduced as a regular guest in most of the fashionable assemblies; of her *private* claims to that distinction it is best to be silent, but her manners and exterior behaviour were proper and genteel."

Perhaps Grassini, in Lord Mount-Edgcumbe's company, was in a more reticent mood than usual, for others speak of her alarming frankness on many occasions. Lord Londonderry was astonished to the pitch of dumbness by her account of her tender friendship with his father, Sir C. Stewart, when minister at Paris. Of Napoleon and Wellington she spoke with equal disregard of blushes. "See this snuff-box; Napoleon gave it me one morning at the Tuileries where I had paid him a visit. 'This is for you, you are a fine creature,' he would say. Ah! why would he not listen to me and patch things up with *ce cher Villainton?*"

The Iron Duke himself had a tender episode with the singer, or so it is related. Neither of them knew

one word of the other's tongue; but they contrived, says gossip, to understand each other well enough.

Some of the aroma of the imperial past clung to the singer. She was again in Paris when the city was in the hands of the allies; and there Wellington's niece, Lady Burghersh, met her at the British Ambassador's, and speaks of the interest which Grassini excited on account of her having been a favourite of the deposed Emperor.[1]

As years went on the grand contralto tones were lost, and Grassini's voice was transformed into a somewhat rasping soprano. She contrived to have somewhere in her a vein of carefulness, not always kin to the artistic temperament, and saved money in a manner not common with her sisters of song. She retired a wealthy woman, and died in Italy in 1850 at the good age of seventy-seven.

[1] *Reminiscences of Lady Burghersh.* Edited by Lady Rose Weigall.

VI

'GEORGINA'

THE varied splendours of this career have lain in the dust some forty years or so—scarce more than forty. Mlle. George is within a little of our own ebullient generation. Born (1787) two years before the great Revolution, she died (1867) three years before the great destruction of Sedan. Victor and vanquished, Napoleon droops and sinks at St. Helena, travels to his home among the dead; forty years later his "beautiful Georgina," his "ever kind and good Georgina," in mere glimmering and decay, but still with gold in her heart, creeps neglected and unknown amid the by-ways of suburban Paris. Burdened with an obesity that made strangers turn and stare at her, she shuffles along in the half-provincial solitudes of Passy, not forgetting and not repining, keeping warm those memories invested with "purpureal gleams" of the Consulate and Empire.

In the curious gallery we are wandering through hers is certainly one of the most sympathetic figures. What a mixture of childishness, good-nature, and simple vanity we find in her *Memoirs*, which have but recently been given to the world! She writes these with an untutored pen at seventy years of age; a poor old unwieldy thing, unheeded and obscure in

the mad Paris of the Second Empire; she who had been Clytemnestra, Mérope, Lucretia Borgia, Marie Tudor—and the lover of Napoleon. Her gaze is on the past; she sees herself treading the stage with Talma, moving as a goddess and looking as a queen; she breathes the air of an October morning at the hunting-lodge of Butar, walking the misty woods, a radiant girl half-fearful of her dubious glories, her arm trembling in the arm of Napoleon. Her pen stops for a moment, and as she tries one spelling after another for the word she wants to put on paper, her old bleared eyes (not those that flame upwards from the canvas of Lagrenée!) take in the wretchedness of her lodging, and she remembers how frightened her girlish modesty was (or pretended to be) at the great blazing chandelier in the great bedroom at Saint-Cloud, on the night that Constant slipped her in there to meet face to face for the first time the foremost man of Europe. All these things she brings to mind without bitterness; all these triumphs of a life that revolved betwixt the noblest theatres and the most splendid and potent courts in the world; all the people who applauded and showered gifts on her, and those who fought and caballed against her; and when she thinks she has found the right way to spell the word (which is generally the wrong way), she takes up her palsied kind old pen again: "All these remembrances are very dear to me, and I have the sweet consolation of knowing that I have never varied in my affections. I am poor; what does that matter? I am

Mc Quinn sc.

Mademoiselle George

In the rôle of "[illegible] in Cinna." From a painting by [illegible] in the Foyer des Artistes, [illegible] Français

rich in heart, I think, and above all in my devotion to that *immense* family which befriended my youth. I shall have the honour of carrying my first sentiments to the grave with me. Perhaps I shall not have enough money to bury me. It is quite possible; I was not born to heap up riches. But I shall have a spadeful of earth and a few flowers from my friends. What more does one want?"

II

In the winter of 1802, the year in which Bonaparte was named First Consul for life, Paris was rather excited about a début that was to come at the Comédie Française. That distinguished tragic actress, Mlle. Raucourt ("Sappho" Raucourt), had picked up at Amiens a lovely little stroller by whose precocious talent she had been so much impressed that she had insisted on carrying the neophyte to Paris as her pupil. "Mlle. George" was the little stroller's name before the public. Her father, George Weymer, was the manager and chef d'orchestre of a nomad troupe, in which the mother played the parts of soubrettes. To Paris they went, George and the careful mother, under the wing of Mlle. Raucourt.

The resplendent Raucourt, waited on by princes and other high origins (for the Terror was overpast), and occasionally shooting rabbits and giving water-parties at Orleans, was a very lazy teacher. Happily

for Georgie there was at hand good Mme. de Ponty, Raucourt's companion and duenna, daughter of a former maid of honour to Marie Antoinette. "You must get on with the child's lessons," said Mme. de Ponty; "you are neglecting her shockingly. See, there is that Duchesnois girl, our rival, has already made her first appearance, and George was to have been before her." So the lessons were pushed on, and in November of 1802 Mlle. George obtained her "ordre de début."

"Play Clytemnestra, Racine's Clytemnestra, at sixteen? It is ridiculous and impossible!" Probably this was the general and genuine opinion in Paris, an opinion that was certainly voiced with some loudness by the partisans of Mlle. Duchesnois, who was eight-and-twenty. But let us come to the début, merely noting that, on her way home from rehearsal the night before, the débutante had amused herself by knocking and ringing at every door in the Rue des Colonnes.

Clytemnestra in *Iphigénie en Aulide.*

Georgina tells us, and emphasizes the fact that she is "not lying," that "at midday the crowd thronged all the doors of the theatre." Mlle. Raucourt had sprained her ankle, and had to be carried in to her pupil's dressing-room. "The pit was filled with actors and people of distinction." On the side of the débutante, "my brother in the pit, and my sister in the stalls, put on all my mother's old gloves to make the utmost possible noise in applauding." Georgina informs us that she faced her audience

with scarcely any fear. Mlle. Vanhove was the Iphigenia, and Talma the Achilles.

There was some growling and even some hissing from the faction of Duchesnois, but as the play advanced the plaudits grew hot and wild. The audience sat amazed before this imperial girl, the stroller's child from Amiens, who took the stage like a splendid creature in her prime. We have Geoffroy's article on this historic first performance.

After remarking on the "most terrible siege" at the doors of the theatre (Georgina, as she said, was "not lying"), he goes on: "The councillors of Priam, on seeing Helen pass, cried, 'A princess so beautiful deserves to be battled for; but, let her beauty be never so marvellous, peace is before all things.' And I, seeing Mlle. George, said to myself, 'What surprise that people are suffocated for so superb a woman? But were she, if possible, more beautiful still, it is better that we should not be suffocated, even in her own interests; for spectators, when the sight costs them so dear, are more apt to be severe upon a débutante.' Preceded on the stage by an extraordinary reputation for beauty, Mlle. George has not belied her fame. In her face are blended the graces of France with the regularity and nobility of Greece. In figure she is sister to Apollo as she moves on the banks of Eurotas, surrounded by her nymphs, and lifting her head above them. Her whole person might be offered as a model to the chisel of Guérin. When her opening lines were heard, the ear was less inclined to her

than the eye; the nervousness inevitably due to such a moment had altered her voice, naturally flexible, sonorous and of wide compass. Some defects which could be perceived in the acting and diction must be ascribed to the same cause—defects quite easy of correction. A girl of sixteen, appearing for the first time before so vast and imposing an assembly, could scarcely have the full use of her faculties; it suffices that she showed at her début the possibilities of greatness as an actress. Her very faults have a noble origin; they spring from impetuosity and an ardour that at present she knows not how to regulate, for in that lovely body is a soul eager to gush forth. This is no statue of Parian marble; it is Pygmalion's Galatea, live and warm, but overwhelmed as yet by the legion of her new sensations."

Among the audience was the First Consul, who marked his disapproval of the malcontents by the vigour of his own applause.

III

The nomad from Amiens, still in her teens, blazed among the stars of Paris. She was a frolicsome star, given to playing hide-and-seek in the streets at night when she was not playing tragedy in the theatre. She was a runaway star, and there were brave attempts to capture her. Lucien Bonaparte wanted to set her up in his house, Prince Sapieha

did set her up: "I had my bedroom in lilac and embroidered muslin." Enterprising suitors elbowed one another in her dressing-room. There was a "M. Papillotes" (Mr. Curling Papers) who "assumed the air of a kind papa"—and did up Clytemnestra's hair with 500-franc notes.

Almost imploringly does she whisper us that not one among these fribbles, old or young, had tasted love with her. Though we have but her word for it, we dare be known to think that she speaks the truth. The destiny that was to plant the name of George on the edge or in the appendices of history had not yet got its grip on her. We remark, however, that the First Consul was almost always in his box when she performed, and that in the midst of the scene her eye was caught by the "sunny hand" playing nervously upon the cushion.

"My dear, you are crazed about your First Consul," said Prince Sapieha.

"No, I am not a bit crazed about him. I like him and admire him as everybody else does. Don't all the women rise and applaud him when he appears in his box?"

One night—

"On returning home I found the Consul's chief valet, Constant, who came to beg me, in the Consul's behalf, to allow myself to be taken, at eight o'clock next evening, to Saint-Cloud. The Consul wished to compliment me on my success."

A night of tremors, succeeded by a day of tremors. She means, of course, to go, but plays prettily

enough upon the reader's expectations. In the day she strays to the Bois, visits her perfumer and milliner, and towards evening wanders to the theatre, where she is teased by Talma about her air of conquest. At eight—

"I found Constant at the foot of the staircase at the stage door. We got into the carriage, driven by the celebrated César, who was rather too fond of the bottle. . . . What passed within me on the road it is impossible to describe."

Arrived at Saint-Cloud—

"There was I alone in that huge room. An immense bed somewhere in the background had green silk curtains, and a big sofa was stretched before the fire. There were large candelabra filled with lighted candles. . . . Not even a little mysterious corner where one can undress."

It is thus, of course, that a young lady of the theatres prepares to receive the felicitations of Cæsar. But Cæsar, it seems, was not that evening in the forceful or compelling humour. If we may believe the *Memoirs*—and the naïve style of the narrative at this point stirs no suspicion—this first encounter passed in very temperate endearments. "He was very tender and delicate. He did not wound my modesty by excess of fervour." "Not to-day; wait, and I will return. I promise you." "He yielded—this man to whom all the world yielded. . . . We went on so till five o'clock in the morning." At which hour the jolly-faced Constant

was standing, very sleepy, at the carriage door, waiting to drive Cinderella back to the lilac chamber in the Rue Saint-Honoré. "He fell fast asleep, and snored all the way." Cinderella tells us that she did not sleep a wink; but she was young, and had something to think about.

She was to return to Saint-Cloud on the morrow, and did so, after pretending to her confidante Talma that she would disobey the command. On the following night she played in *Cinna*, and the First Consul was in his box. A significant line that she spoke in the fifth act—

> "Si j'ai séduit Cinna, j'en séduirai bien d'autres,"

was thrice applauded. Georgina was frightened in her soul. Was the liaison out already, and would the Consul think that she, Georgina herself, had published it? That night she was again at Saint-Cloud. There were no questions and no reproaches; the lover was bent this evening upon conquest. Is it strange or not strange that time should disclose to us, through the half-literate pen of a girl of the theatre, a portrait of Napoleon Bonaparte in the rôle of lady's-maid? "With such gaiety, with such grace and seemliness, did he enact the part, that in spite of myself I was compelled to yield. How was it possible not to be fascinated by and attracted to such a man? He became simple and childish to please me. No longer was he the Consul; he was, perhaps, a man in love, but whose love was neither

violent nor rude. How gentle was his embrace, how tender and how modest were his words!" and so forth.

M. Constant, it may be hoped, enjoyed his rest; for the cue did not come to him till seven in the morning.

Concerning this third interview we are told that it was the "definite" one. The meaning may be divined. "Here I am launched upon a lively existence, sweet for the moment, but which will occasion me plenty of grief. . . . Yes, it is sad, it is heart-rending; it is slavery in golden chains." It may be questioned whether George ever really thought in this way. The First Consul was distinctly the first man in France, and, as manners and morals went, a young actress in the position of Georgina was rather distinguished than degraded by his choice of her. "See what a place it is for you!" cried Talma, who took the shrewd conventional view, and probably thought the girl was quibbling when she talked of shame, virtue, servitude, and golden chains. In a measure she probably was quibbling.

We decline to be sentimental over Georgie's situation. She did not honestly feel that she had disgraced herself; nor, in the estimation of a world much wider than her own small theatrical one, had she in reality done so. She did not believe herself to be in a state of slavery—neither, of course, was she. There was no harem at Saint-Cloud or the Tuileries. The man in power had flung her the handkerchief, and she had picked it up. Was she

in love with Bonaparte? Yes, there is scarcely question of it. A young girl, a young girl of the plebs, a young girl of the stage suddenly risen into fame among the very peers of her calling—and the First Consul of France, the "morning star of war," at her feet. And she pretends to talk of servitude and chains! We read between the lines, and know that she is playing with us. We know, too, that not for a moment does she mean us to believe her.

It is with a lively affection and an infinite loyalty that she dwells (at seventy years of age) on these passages which were for her the greatest in her life. In the dim and hoary days in which the *Memoirs* are written she is Napoleon's still, and the poor little efforts at saving and pretence in them are of no consequence whatever. If we may credit Dumas, who knew her closely, Georgina would have followed the exile to St. Helena.

With his "good and kind" Georgina, Bonaparte threw off his years (which were not so many) and played the boy again. All those stories of his rudeness and violence with women, she says, were a calumny; and towards her, at any rate, he would seem to have been almost uniformly gentle, considerate, affectionate. He was "gay and even childish." Often they played and romped together like children.

"I arrived. Constant said to me:—

"'The Consul has gone up and is waiting for you.'

"I entered. No one was there, and I made a

hunt in all the rooms. I called out. No answer. Then I rang.

"'Constant, has the Consul gone down again?'

"'No, madame; search well!'

"He winked, and pointed to the door of the boudoir, where I had never thought of looking. The Consul was there, hidden under cushions, and laughing like a school-boy."

One chilly evening in the library at Saint-Cloud the Consul sits on the rug before the fire and pulls Georgina beside him. "We both sat on the carpet. Then he climbed the small library ladder. He wanted to take *Phèdre* and make me read her declaration, which bored me horribly, so much so that whenever he was about to take down the volume, I wheeled the ladder into the middle of the library. He laughed and climbed down, and boxed my ears just as softly as it could be done."

The evening's frolic over, they retired for the night. "You could say," she suggests to her friend Mme. Valmore, that the sleep of Cæsar "was as calm as a child's, and his breathing soft; that his awakening, with a sweet smile on his lips; that he rested his noble and handsome head on my bosom, and nearly always slept so; and that I, young as I was, made some almost philosophical reflections on seeing the man who commanded the world abandon himself completely in the arms of a young girl. Oh! he knew well that I would let myself be killed for him."

If there is no question of Georgina's love for

Cæsar, we can as readily believe that she was to him much more than the passing fancy of an autocrat. This intercourse lasted six years. On her return from her travels and conquests abroad—had she not received the homage of Alexander I and King Jerome?—the beautiful woman, still in the bloom of youth, was restored by Imperial decree to all her rights as a member of the Comédie Française. Napoleon never forgot her. Georgina's name was on his lips at Saint-Helena.

VII

THE FEMININE UNDER THE EMPIRE

THE proclamation of the Empire in 1804 was the touchstone of Napoleon's plan, his *système de fusion* of the *ancien régime* with the mushroom aristocracy of his own creation. His generals and statesmen, rewarded, it may be allowed, in many instances for no inadequate return of merit, were now to measure themselves off as courtiers against the Faubourg with whom courtliness was an instinct, a tinge in the blood. Their women, and this was still more crucial, were to join in the *entourage* with the haughty *grandes dames* left over from the Terror. Except in cases where it had appeared a menace to internal peace, Napoleon had granted to the *émigrés* leave to re-enter France.

The ladies of the new order were not ill-pleased to figure in the Court picture. Republican simplicity, however much it may be vaunted as an abstract gain in ethic scheme, has a want of glamour for the feminine imagination; something dreary wraps it round.

Now, Court dress and gems and feminine emulation were to have their field in the new order of things at the Tuileries. The Faubourg even may have felt that there was here some attempt at dignity,

some imitation of the picturesque which in the former century had reigned at Versailles. They might scorn the upstarts with whom they must rub shoulders, though the terrible object lesson of the bloody head, the ensanguined retrospect of the *fin-de-siècle* would stifle any larger protest against the new development of social affairs.

Some drew the line as tightly as they dared. Mme. de Narbonne, for instance, would put in an appearance at Court only twice a year or so, on such occasions as were more or less compulsory.

"I fear your mother does not like me," said the Emperor to the Comte de Narbonne in tones of pique.

"Sire, she has not as yet advanced beyond admiration," rejoined the Comte, splitting the difference between truth and rudeness with a *finesse* which left the newer courtiers empty-mouthed.

This hob-nobbing with the plutocrat and the new *noblesse* seemed strange also to the foreigner.

"It is certainly very odd and difficult to think of these people as princes and princesses," says young Lady Burghersh of Princesse de Talleyrand Périgord, her neighbour at a great imperial function.

There must have been relief that the refinements of every-day habit need no longer be dreaded as indicative of the accursed aristocrat. For, when the Empress changed three times a day, a marked attachment to clean linen could hardly ban a Citoyenne; and "Citoyenne," indeed, she was no longer, for "Madame" had returned to usage. The

apostles of Fraternity preserved, it is true, among the returning tide of courtliness, some unlovely marks of Liberty. English ladies, visiting the theatre in Paris, beheld, with amazement, the *parvenu* seated near them in the dress circle, and, indifferent to their presence, spitting with equality both around himself and on the neighbouring seats.

Beethoven, it is true, might rend the score of his Eroica Symphony, and throw it to the ground, when he heard that his idol had the clay feet which had led to the assumption of an imperial diadem, but, on the whole, the new development pleased the crowd, the feminine half of it especially. For what was a fairy tale without a palace and a prince? The Emperor, too, had gifts as a stage-manager. He was less concerned, doubtless, than the hanger-on at the possibilities for sumptuous raiment and imperial ceremony, but he had a master's knowledge of their influence on the crowd.

"Don't imagine for a moment," he explained to one of his brothers, "that I care for these things myself, but the public is impressed by them," and with an eye to the gallery he used his state coach with all its magnificence of trapping and its eight horses of *couleur Isabelle.* The velvet and gold lace of the imperial robes sat less impressively on him than the unobtrusive *redingote grise* and the plain beaver hat which had carried him through his truer triumphs, and he was always pleased to get rid of them; but he let them play their part in the *mise-en-scène.*

Again the Empress's *entourage* was now to be regulated in accordance with the new order. To her relative, Madame de la Rochefoucauld, was given the appointment of Dame d'Honneur with an annual stipend of 40,000 francs. She was hardly an impressive Mistress of the Robes, being deformed, and obliged to have a cushion placed on the seat of her chair to raise her to a suitable height at table. Madame de la Valette was the lady-in-waiting. Twelve *dames du palais* replaced the lady companions who had been enough for the wife of the First Consul. Josephine, as is frequently the case with her sex, showed far more adaptability to the throne than did the Emperor. Her deportment at the Coronation was admirable, say several observers, in spite of the difficulties of the regal train which her Bonaparte sisters-in-law maliciously neglected to carry properly, and which, dragging from her shoulders, nearly caused the Empress to stumble. At the smaller audiences she had a more felicitous manner of address, and in her few words to the presentees did not fall into the blunders made by Napoleon, whose small talk was not ready and who, in absence of mind or indifference, often said awkward things to the ladies present. He would inquire after the nursery of a lady already a grandmother—this, indeed, might have passed as a subtle implication of compliment. But the blunder was irreparable when he inquired of young unmarried people whether they had any children, or when, on hearing the name of a lady newly come to Court, he

exclaimed: "You! Why, they told me you were quite good-looking!" Yet there was a simplicity in his manner which favourably impressed some foreign ladies, even while he was saying what were palpably "royal nothings."

The scheme of entertainment was developed with the coming of the Empire. Large dinners of two hundred guests were given at the Tuileries every fortnight in the Salon des Maréchaux, after which the guests would retire to the Galerie de Diane. Here also a concert, listened to with some boredom, was sometimes given, followed by a much more attractive entertainment by *danseuses* from the Opera.

If the code of morals was somewhat improved by the purging of the Terror, the standard of luxury soon rose as high as ever. The women of the new *régime* were as sumptuously decked with gems and clothed in garments quite as costly as their forerunners at Versailles. At first Greek styles prevailed, merging in later years into a more gorgeous Orientalism congenial to the Emperor. Sumptuous Turkish fabrics became the vogue, and gold and silver thread and spangles were used as trimmings for India muslins and for tulle, then newly introduced. Short or trained dresses were worn according to degree of ceremony. Blonde and other Belgian laces, or *point d'Angleterre* trimmed dresses, caps and underwear. Of the Empress Josephine's personal extravagance we have already heard enough. She would throw money in the

gutter, yet did not pay her debts. In a few short years she had spent on dress over six million francs. Her successor kept within her allowance of a half million yearly. Napoleon was urgent with Josephine to appear well dressed, but he deprecated *le gaspillage* in which she revelled. He was forcible in his disapproval. Yet once at Brussels he thought her attire less splendid than that of the ladies of that capital, and was only reassured when one of his Cabinet Ministers artfully reckoned up the cost of the outfit to the Empress's advantage. Another time a pink and silver gown displeased his taste, and he threw an ink-pot at his consort to emphasize his disapproval.

Powder and the enormous hair-constructions with which we associate Marie Antoinette, had vanished years before. Ladies now were *coiffées en cheveux*, wore their own hair, in short. Gems and artificial flowers or feathers were worn at night, and by day a hat with strings tied under the chin. Josephine wore such a hat all the earlier part of the day, and received in the same in her salon at the Tuileries. On dressing in the morning, however, she would tie her head up in a bright bandanna, and this was always becoming to her Spanish colouring. The toilet in her case held secrets, and part of it was performed in complete seclusion. *Blanc de perle* and *rouge* were called into the service. Mme. Martin, a celebrated manufacturer of *rouge*, had survived the Terror. When this part of her dressing was over, Josephine, in a light dressing-gown,

would submit herself to the coiffeur. Herbault and Duplan held this office, but waited also on ladies outside the palace. Napoleon, gauging rightly the opportunities for gossiping that the plan involved, paid Duplan a large salary and retained him for the exclusive service of the young Empress Marie-Louise. Napoleon was in the habit of visiting both his Empresses at their toilette, and here would take place some of that horse-play of which we hear so much : ear-pinching, teasing of the Empress and her ladies; sometimes clumsy treading on the toes of one of the latter.

There were good looks enough among the palace ladies, but it is a vexed question as to which had the advantage, the *ancienne noblesse* or the new "smart set." Most contradictory views were held. One *viveur* says that smartness was out of fashion in the Faubourg on account of the display of that quality by the upstarts of the Tuileries. The aristocrats entrenched themselves in dowdiness. But again, an Englishwoman avers that the former ladies showed still to great advantage beside the latter. However a lady of Georgian times might have no use for smartness any more than had the *émigrés*, we may infer Paris fashions were the standard which London tried, sometimes rather clumsily, to live up to.

The general style of the Empire dress has been rendered so familiar by recent revivals as to render exact description superfluous. We know of the long clinging skirts, the waist line raised to the arm-

pits and the heel-less and, generally, sandaled shoe. A low-necked dress was worn for morning as well as evening toilet, a kind of frilled *guimpe* being sometimes used to cover the neck early in the day. The *cherusque*, suggested by the Medicean collar of two centuries before, but narrower and setting closer to the form, gave scope for the display of delicate transparencies in lace or cambric.

The muff and boa of fur were in use, though the latter seems to have been less in fashion than under the Consulate. Swansdown was a favourite material for muffs and trimmings.

Sleeves were either of the puffed variety, covering the top of the arm, or were long, transparent and close-fitting, reaching to the wrist, and fastened through their length with loops and buttons. We have seen their originals on many a classic goddess.

A smaller ruff, a modified version of the Valois or Elizabethan kind, sometimes helped to cover the bare neck by day time. Even more does it suggest to us the "Toby frill" of the 'eighties.

In the latter years of the Empire there was more restraint in headgear; toques, close and neat with a small plume clinging to the curve of the brim, take one's mind back to fourteenth-century masculine head covering. Again, a frilled cap sometimes appears as outdoor wear, more like the Transatlantic "fascinator" than anything else we can recall, though made of fabric and not of knitting or crotchet.

The hair was sometimes cut short and curled all

over. Sometimes, classic loops or knot were arranged at the back and curls over the forehead, such as Anne of Austria might have worn. More severe was the Chinoise style, when the hair was strained tightly to the top of the head and imprisoned in a band.

Gloves were very long as worn with the short sleeve which they met at the shoulder. White and tan seem to have been the best worn tints, while grey appears in mourning garb. Shoes often matched them. Children appear in mittens.

As we have already said, Paris then, as well as later, set the wear of the day, and sent coloured prints to England to enlighten her neighbours across the Straits of Dover. There were items not approved sometimes. "I don't know what you will say to the stripes," says Lady Burghersh, "but everything is worn so large just now in Paris." She decries the hats, just as one of her compatriots had decried a little earlier the bonnets of which he wrote as "deeply slovenly, confused-looking things."

Lady Burghersh thinks the hats "worse and worse, they make them now with very narrow small pokes (brims) and crowns two feet high, and the front covered with enormous bows and bunches of flowers, and these are worn by every creature."

A precursor of the coal-scuttle of the mid-century these appear to have been. Then there were military shapes *à la Prussienne*, almost as high as a Welsh peasant's hat and decked with wildly-waving cock's plumes.

In the royal meals the simplicity of Napoleon's personal taste was combined with the stateliness which he regarded as indispensable to the staging of imperialism. His own meal might be dispatched in ten minutes and be quitted hastily for labours in the *cabinet de travail.* His tastes were satisfied with a grill of mutton, a poulet Marengo, the chicken stewed with oil and a dash of garlic, which was endeared to him by sentiment perhaps as much as gastronomy. Beans, peas or lentils would make another course if time allowed, but it was not uncommon for him in his haste or abstraction to eat indiscriminately of roast and sweet *entremets* in turn. Chambertin and water was his common drink, and except for some gossip about drunkenness after his Russian disaster, we hear of no excess in this direction. Gossip, too, crediting him with a dozen cups of black coffee daily, may be disregarded. Sometimes an early morning cup of tea, or infusion of orange flowers, would be taken on rising.

The irregularity of meals was met by a standing order to keep a roast chicken always ready. Thus, at regular intervals, the palace scullions must have spitted poultry to keep in touch with the exaction.

The menu for the ladies and the suite was not prodigal. Napoleon himself went into details of the commissariat as any hotel proprietor might have done. By giving an allowance in lieu of coffee he saved largely on the palace exchequer. His economies were nothing to those of Madame Mère,

who banished melon from the board because her ladies ate sugar (a serious item) with the fruit.

The fusion of ostentation and parsimony is seen again in the Princess Pauline, whose servants had orders to put out the candles in her reception-rooms when any lull in the stream of visitors occurred, and to relight them on necessity.

Napoleon apprised himself of the current price of the most trivial article.

Some curtain-fastener or what-not was required. He went *incognito* to the dealers' and, having learnt the usual price, was ready to beat down the extortions of the royal purveyor.

"How much," he asked one of the great officers of the Household, "do you suppose this *vol-au-vent* would cost?"

"Twelve francs to you, Sire, six to a private person," was the reply.

"That's how I'm rooked!" cogitated the Emperor.

Marie-Louise was, in the manner of a school-girl, something of a gourmet. She enjoyed the creams, the pastry and cakes of her new capital, which could have held no disappointment even after Vienna.

If the state dinners at the Tuileries kept up the pitch of splendour and ceremony, it would seem that a greater simplicity was making its way in general society in the latter part of the reign. Indeed at one house of average *ton*, the services were reduced to a minimum; except for fish and meat

courses the whole *déjeûner* was put on the table at once.

The palace gave no lead to the *dévote.* Mass was celebrated on Sundays—that was all. Napoleon, while recognizing that religious form was a social necessity, would ill have brooked interference from spiritual directors. The wise direction of the Bishop of Nantes, who was confessor to Marie Louise, receives his approbation.

When the Empress consulted him as to the Friday abstinence from meat, he inquired what was the custom of her husband.

"Then, as you sit at his table, do as he does in public. You will find plenty of ways in which to mortify yourself secretly in the sight of God alone."

Again, when there was a question of her receiving the Holy Communion in public, he dissuaded her, saying it would only draw attention to the absence of the Emperor at the Holy Feast.

Again, Court ritual recalls the old dispensation.

Ladies-in-waiting, it is true, had benches and did not kneel or crouch upon the floor, as under the early Bourbon kings, but there is a flavour of old time in the regulations laid down for the imperial worship. The *fauteuil* was restricted to the Emperor and his Consort. The sisters Bonaparte found themselves debarred and not a little ill-tempered in consequence, but Madame Mère preached docility to imperial decrees in the great day of her son's glory.

The general standard of elegance and luxury in furnishing was going up. Every lady of fashion

had a bathroom and used it as often as two or three times a week (a lavish use indeed!). Mme. Récamier's bath, when not in use, was covered with a scarlet cushion. Her bed must have outshone the imperial couch; *la haute finance* does not lag behind to-day in its household appointments.

The suite occupied by the Emperor and Empress at the Tuileries was on the ground floor and was the same that later formed the apartments of Marie Louise. First came an ante-chamber, from which opened a salon hung with a violet blue shade patterned with maroon. Here was Domenichino's "St. Cecilia." The second salon opening out of this was the object of admiration on the part of Parisians and foreign visitors alike. It was hung with yellow silk with fringe of brown and red. The mahogany furniture was upholstered with Indian silk of similar colouring or with superb tapestry. From the ceiling hung an English chandelier of crystal lustres mounted with ormolu. The mirrors were not framed, but draped with silken fabrics, and at their base console tables of fine marble held specimen pieces of Sèvres, vases of granite, and finely designed candelabra. Here Napoleon and Josephine gave their private audiences, entering it from the bedroom which opened out of it. In the latter room a double bed of mahogany with gilded ornaments stood in an alcove, curtained with the prevailing colouring of blue, with gold and white fringes. Pictures by old masters hung upon the walls.

Next was a simple bathroom from which, by a

of grandeur to the Parisian eye, but made a different impression on visitors from England, whose more sombre reception- and sleeping-rooms caused the bright tints and costly fringes to appear sumptuous beyond description.

In their early days at the Tuileries, the Bonaparte couple observed a bourgeois communism in their sleeping arrangements. "They actually slept together!" exclaims surprised Miss Berry. In the more formal days of the Empire, Napoleon frequently visited the Empress, sometimes because she persuaded him that her lighter slumbers were a security to him. Roustan, the faithful Mamelouk, could snore, as we shall hear, through nocturnal invasions of his master's chamber. Napoleon, too, was a chilly being, and would arrive in the middle of the night, explaining to the Empress that he needed to be warmed. Marie Louise, however, found much warmth unsuited to her. Her bright colouring increased to petunia intensity before the large fires demanded by the Emperor. Napoleon rarely remained with his second consort for the whole night. Here, again, old Bourbon days returned to oust Republican family habits.

VIII

THE WOMEN OF THE FAMILY

In the estimates of witnesses of Letizia Bonaparte's own day we find expected inconsistencies and confusions, yet there is concord on the subject of her appearance. Even in her fifth decade she faces our contemplation with noble outlines and grand austerity of feature. Her form, a little bent with time, has not the full advantage of its height of five feet four, a measurement rather above the average of her generation. Her hands, those beautiful hands which Napoleon inherited, are marred a trifle by an accident to the first finger of one, which remains rigid when the other fingers have assumed a curve. Of her feet there is no word but praise; rounded, high-instepped, and of perfect shape and size, they inspire the laudatory pen of the Duchesse d'Abrantès.

Her style of dress is perfect, its tones and stuffs accordant with the balance between her age and the voice of fashion.

The *valetaille* gossip of that streak of miserliness which showed itself amid the glories of the Tuileries, there jangling more discordant than in the straitened days of yore. Yet Madame Mère could loose her purse-strings to relieve the misery of Paris; in a

winter of distress she gave most liberally, and was a substantial patroness of the sisters-of-mercy who cared for the sick poor of the city. Of course the most engrossing speculation lies with the question of how Napoleon's mother judged of him in her secret soul. Always he had been the leader in the family conclave, and in the main she would seem, as did so many others, to have believed that the king can do no wrong. If Eugène de Beauharnais could bend his judgment to conformity with Napoleon's project of divorcing the Empress Josephine, his mother, it need give us no surprise that Mme. Letizia was satisfied that the hero-son must shape destiny and be approved by the feminine contingent of his blood.

Behind the fence of her strong soul, cares for her daughters must have fretted her mother-nature. The intoxicant of such an upward flight as theirs in so small a space of time may well have swept them off their feet. For her it was to question their adaptability, the future outcome of their progress on that *viâ regia* to which no known associations of ancestry or of habitude could serve as finger-posts. She, on the brink, watched their essay in royal waters, for her creation as princess-mother was later than her daughters' royalty.

Between the mother and the son there was a certain cloud in the early days of empire, for she had taken sides with Lucien in the quarrel between him and the Emperor relating to his marriage with the divorced Mme. Jouberthon. Jerome's marriage, too,

had been a fresh sore. Madame Mère bore her son's neglect in silence, but, mother-like, she had sad hours in her own soul. Yet in the main Napoleon felt for his mother a respect which he held for no other woman.

Then came the final years when all the glory of her Napoleon had blackened into the storm-cloud, and when he had been led away captive to the Southern seas; and then all that there was of her remained pure mother. Had the journey meant death, she would have braved it to be with the son who had ruled all nations, and who must now pace the cage barred by the distrustful caution of the Powers. In those days, when Napoleon gave so many of his pent-in hours to retrospect, he spoke to the little company who shared the rock with their lost leader of his mother with words which, if tinged with a *soupçon* of the rostrum, were yet extended beyond any *imprimatur* he had vouchsafed to womankind.

The eldest of the Bonaparte sisters who grew to womanhood, although she has been set in the background by the tale of beauty and of feminine dazzlement told of the younger women of the family, is to some thinkers the one who most piques contemplation. For she was, they tell us, the one most like Napoleon in temperament, and by this very likeness was most surely destined to arouse his enmity. She was less plastic than pretty Caroline, and light-living Paulette, with her wilful moods and alternating

amenability. Marianne, as she was in her school-days, or Elise, as in her imperial ones, had the outlines of the *femme forte* in her mental frame. Educated in the royal foundation of St. Cyr, we come upon her there in one of those hours in which, as Victor Hugo says, the sorrows of the child make nothingness of those of men or even women. Elise, struggling with tears, confessed at length to the kindly friend Madame Permon, who had accompanied Bonaparte to the school, that, a picnic-tea having been arranged as a farewell feast for one of the royal pensioners, she had not a sum large enough, even if she gave the whole six francs of her possession, to contribute to the fund. The bitterness of the family poverty is here revealed.

When we see Elise again, she is the masterful spirit that must of necessity fall foul of the brother-autocrat. Not a pleasant person either to the general acquaintance; the Napoleon-in-petticoats style is not ingratiating. As princess, dowered with one of the Italian territories, we find her living with her brother Lucien in Paris, less intimate with the Faubourg than with the "consort of geometry." Mme. Laplace replaced in her *entourage* the dames of the old *régime* who had been installed by Napoleon in his sisters' households. Elise was disposed to mental cultivation of the most aggressive kind. She would have grounded herself on the model of a learned aristocrat, but Napoleon, with a sneer, decried alike her model and her own replica. Elise, descanting with a Voltairean flavour on admirations of her own

which ran amok of all her brother's estimates, drew forth at length the acrid "You! you're just a caricature of the Duchesse du Maine!" and so Napoleon flung himself out of her reception-room. General Bacciochi seems to have been principally Princess Elise's husband. He was a general officer with his wife as commander-in-chief. Married to him in 1798, Elise and her husband played less illustrious rôles in the royal show than the more malleable Caroline or Pauline, or than the stepdaughter Hortense de Beauharnais.

Caroline, though not next in the family chronology, seems to claim attention before her more resplendent elder sister, Pauline. After the loveliest woman of her day, as Napoleon and others of her contemporaries thought Pauline to be, Caroline may fall a little flat perhaps in the story. Yet she had her own dower of physical attraction. A little thickset and awkward in her movements she is in her early teens, as we first see her, and, owing to the family vicissitudes, much neglected in her education. But with dawning womanhood her points developed, her bright-coloured hair, her white and shapely bust, and her complexion tinted as the rose-petal or as the inner shell. "Her features could not compare with those of Pauline," says the Duchesse d'Abrantès, "but her skin resembled *un satin blanc glacé de rose*"—we despair of finding English for this delightful pen-painting. Caroline had a rustic charm; the magnificence of regal robes overwhelmed her;

her bloom seemed to fade, says the acute lady of the memoirs, beneath the weight of diamonds and of rubies.

About her betrothal to Murat there is much clashing of evidence among contemporary witnesses. It was perhaps at Milan that Murat first saw the young sister of his commander, while his request for her hand was made at the Luxembourg, where the consular court was established.

Caroline was about sixteen, and was still known by the name of her childhood, Annonciata. Bonaparte was much opposed to his demand. He had other plans for Caroline, in the first place, and a personal objection to the suitor.

"I cannot give my sister to the son of an innkeeper," he pronounced. One tavern-keeper was enough among the Bonapartes-in-law. Mme. Lucien's father was one, we must remember. It took a week to melt the resolution of the consular head of the family. Then Bonaparte came round. "Well, I believe they suit each other." (Josephine and the rest had taken the lover's side.) "It shall not be said that I was one to aim at great alliances for my sisters." (Here one eye must have been upon the gallery.)

So they married, and Caroline reigned. Together, they were sovereigns in Naples, where Murat revolted traitorously, it must be feared, against his suzerain. The sister who had received all from him was to turn against the family autocrat and the family benefactor. It is a sordid spectacle; let us

leave it, and turn to that elder sister who redeemed a thousand faults by an ultimate loyalty.

Pauline the renowned, the historic, the one *véritable princesse* of the family (said the Faubourg); the loveliest woman in Europe, said her brother. In childhood she played mischievous tricks on the miserly uncle of the family. We know that she was considered by the friend and chronicler, Mme. d'Abrantès, to have been far more beautiful in the days of her earliest girlhood, when yet unknown to the ears and eyes of Europe, than in her pride of later years as the sister of a Napoleon and the wife of a Roman prince.

Pauline was, above all, a woman, says one; this was her truest, her most eminent charm. She had the inconsistencies, the incongruities, the blending of attributes out of which the spell of woman is woven. Behind her languorous gaze scintillated suggestive fire. Her petty caprices, her childish *bouderie* were forgiven for one gleam of her mist-veiled eyes. Napoleon winced at her easy loves for the undistinguished; he was deeply displeased at her behaviour to his second Empress, to whom at times she would not offer even decent civility. Yet the streak of gold shone out in the days of downfall. It was Pauline who sent her jewels to her brother in the last evil days, jewels which were taken from his carriage after the catastrophe of Waterloo, and which, they tell us, were exhibited and gloated over by the curious Londoner, though by no shadow of

pretence could they have been claimed as lawful spoil of the conquering Allies.

Of course among the clatter of a thousand tongues are many false reports about Pauline, or again many tales which we must set against the custom of to-day. When she bared her lovely limbs to Canova for the reclining figure chiselled by the sculptor, it would not appear that modesty received the shattering it might expect in our own day. The plaster cast was moulded on her very person, and Mme. d'Abrantès, who appears as champion on the point, says that it had been stated that Canova rectified certain defects which existed in the princess's limbs.

"I, like many others, have seen the legs of the Princess Borghese, and . . ." in short, her friend could award her a *testamur.*

An almost morbid vanity and delight in her own beauty seemed to possess Pauline. Between the bath and the handing of the chemise (which was carried out after the royal precedent of France) she would pace her dressing-room . . . there are tales indeed . . . relates the Emperor's valet, Constant, but. . . . Then chimes in a third conclusively: "She was perhaps a demon, but oh! what a lovely demon!"

Leclerc did not live to become a sovereign. Like the husbands of other beauties his path had thorns. Pauline's lightness (to call it nothing worse) distressed the general. She worried him by capricious tricks of every description, and, although she had married him of her own free-will, never ceased to

Lefebre Pinxt.

Marie Pauline, Princess Borghese.

remind him a hundred times a day of his overwhelming good-fortune in having gained for his wife a sister of the First Consul.

Pauline's little ways were not a little disturbing to her brother. Cæsar's womenkind should not be talked about. Napoleon might wish that he had not been so easily persuaded to let his sisters marry mere soldiers, when a year or two was to make so great a difference in the status of the family. As things were, however, he intended that Pauline should be hedged about by proper marital proximity from damaging her own and the family lustre. Leclerc was ordered to San Domingo. Pauline thought only of remaining in joyous Paris, but "if not absolutely forced, was most strenuously invited by Napoleon to accompany her husband." This plan, it is said, put a discreet closure on a pleasant little *amourette* with an actor of the Théâtre Française. Pauline might struggle, but none could long resist the giant's behest. Towards the end of 1801 she sailed with her husband and her young son for San Domingo, accompanied by a perfect flotilla of bandboxes and Paris finery. *Adieu, France!* Pauline probably gave her general a bad quarter of an hour or so while the coast receded.

Her exile, however, came suddenly to an end; for Leclerc died, and she returned to France. "Lovely as an angel" in her weeds, she remained in decorous seclusion at the house of Joseph Bonaparte and his wife in the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré. "But oh! how bored she was! how hideously bored!"

Pauline had flies in her amber. She could hide those *plaques* of gristle, her ears, the one defect in her lovely person, with her abundant hair, but the tropics had taken their toll, and one of her beautiful hands was for some time disfigured by a dreadful sore. However, *tout passe;* she was still the reigning beauty of Europe; and Napoleon, consul of France, was arranging her second marriage with Prince Camille Borghese, a worthy nonentity, brought up without education by a Roman father who, with a touching simplicity, considered that his children had all learning enough to be good subjects of the Papal Sovereign.

Pauline was sufficiently good-natured, on the whole, to her young women friends, though "I have heard that in after years she was very spiteful," says Mme. d'Abrantès.

She made her Camille dance. She quarrelled with her Roman prince on the question of precedence when they were making a tour of Piedmont. He was but the husband of an Emperor's sister. Poor Borghese! he and his wife were incompatibles. They appear to have led a politely separate existence in the Papal capital.

As we watch Pauline, with her subtle and illogical charm, there dawns on us the consciousness of her likeness to another unforgettable figure, that of Mary of Scotland. Both with the temperament of the *amoureuse*, both with that faculty for inspiring devotion and fidelity which is so often linked with an incapacity for a reciprocative measure of con-

stancy; both wedded, in a glamour of passion, to husbands soon despised and wearisome, both, in years of sorrow and chastening, levelling the balance of the earthly aggregate with the burden of patience and contrition. And both again, with sudden bursts of the fierce courage of the *bête fauve*, when calamity assailed their kin or their cause, standing by the threatened. If "Madame and Dear Sister," in the insolent splendour of her youth, drew from Napoleon condemnatory warnings, all were forgotten in his downfall, when she even sought from his gaolers the right to be his nurse on the desolate rock of his captivity.

Hortense de Beauharnais, Napoleon's stepdaughter, later his sister-in-law, was, in the course of events, the most important woman connected with the Bonapartes, for she was mother to the Third Napoleon; he who, almost as an adventurer, came to rule over France, until the foe of 1870 crossed her borders. "What dear children are Eugène and Hortense!" wrote the young stepfather in the early days of his marriage to the widow Beauharnais.

Hortense had a merry wit, and would join with her mother in practical jokes played perhaps on the harmless valet Carrat, who attended the Bonaparte ladies at Plombières while Napoleon was absent on the Egyptian campaign. Now, it would be a ghost *à l'Anglaise* with sheet and signs of portent, before which the timorous valet fell half-fainting; again, a booby trap contrived by passing a string through

a hole made in the partition between the valet's sleeping-room and an adjacent ante-room. The collapse of his bed-tester and a drenching from the suspended jar of water, unnoticed in the darkness, were not enough calamity for the ill-used valet. To his cries of woe, his mischievous young mistress responded by a stage-aside to her mother and the ladies on her side of the partition. "Oh, mamma! the frogs and toads in the water will be falling on his face!" The damp valet dried with his own anger at his young mistress's too far-reaching pleasantry.

Hortense and her mother were tenderly devoted to each other. Together they often rode out in the country round La Malmaison. Once the horse ridden by the young girl ran away and, failing to disengage herself from the stirrup, she was dragged along for some feet, but was rescued unhurt by some of the cavaliers of the party.

In the theatrical entertainments of La Malmaison Hortense was able to play a successful part. Girl-like, too, she revelled in *bonbons* and good things. At every halting-place on her journeys the carriage would be filled with *friandises* for the merry traveller, who, it must be noted, could not even then refrain from playing tricks on her drowsy companions. They, scared from slumber by the explosion of a bomb, discovered by the bouquet of a foaming douche which burst upon them that the infernal machine was in reality a bottle of champagne which, provoked by the jolting, by the heat,

and, finally, by the selfish fingers of Miss Hortense, had projected its cork with a furious report.

We linger over the scenes of happy girlhood, for womanhood brought tragedy into the life of Hortense de Beauharnais. "The Queen of Holland was born for sorrows." A throne was merely one among the number.

Napoleon had formed some idea of marrying his step-daughter to Duroc, one of his generals; and Duroc, though he had no great personal inclination for the marriage on its own account, would have accepted Hortense at the instigation of the chief. Later, "when crowns began to rain upon the august family with which he had needed but his own decision to ally himself," the general began to feel regret at having lost such an opportunity. Hortense herself seems to have given her heart to one "M. Carolus," who was speedily chased off the scene; and she was not, it is said, unfavourable to Duroc, but the chief opponent of development in this direction was her own mother.

Josephine, anxious—as we have already seen—to gain a champion in her husband's family, in which she had so many enemies, was pressing for a match between her daughter and Louis Bonaparte, Napoleon's younger brother, then twenty-four years of age, a neurotic, in a feeble state of health, who was himself not ardently desirous of wedding Hortense, since his affections were already given to some other, a shadowy form, says the raconteur, whose identity has never been established. The marriage, in spite

of the unwillingness of both parties, was concluded. Hortense, a very pretty girl, of lively wit, yet of greater strength of character than Josephine, was tied to the melancholic Louis, who, in spite of his attenuated temperament, yet most closely resembled his wondrous elder brother in outward feature.

The marriage, we have stated, took place on January 7, 1802, in a private house.

At the same time was solemnized the marriage of Caroline Bonaparte and General Murat, which had previously been a civil contract only.

Poor Hortense could not conceal her sorrow, and wept during the ceremony, and the bridegroom's feelings were too hurt for him to attempt any endearments. It was a melancholy business. More than melancholy was the horrid gossip, taking its rise, so it was said, in scurrilous English prints, regarding the relations between Napoleon and his young step-daughter, with whom, said these foul tongues, he had been intimate before handing her over as a bride to his younger brother. "No man is a hero to his own valet," but it is the valet Constant who indignantly disclaims for his imperial master any association of so sinister a kind with the young girl who looked up to him with the respectful fear of a daughter of her times.

Here we may dismiss with a word or two of infinite contempt the other loathsome tales which brought Napoleon into horrible association with his sisters Caroline and Pauline. None who had the right to judge can we find to confirm such incom-

mensurable vileness. Indeed, we may affirm that in the history of Napoleon no trace the very faintest has been found of any of the hideous abnormalities which were laid at his door—whether manufactured in England, or concocted, as M. Levy says many tales were, for the amusement of Louis XVIII.

Hortense we have seen again in the depths of her tragedy, a *Mater Dolorosa* set in stone, when her eldest son, Napoleon-Charles, lay dead; and the Queen, his mother, could not let loose her anguish even in tears till her Chamberlain, by a terrible experiment, set the dead boy in her arms and her weeping came to save her reason. Hortense, as the mother of Napoleon III, is set about with tales of intervention in paternity; but these are not for us.

There are minor feminine personalities as well in the family group. Stéphanie de Beauharnais, a niece of Josephine, who strikes our vision in the entrance hall of the Tuileries, youthful, glowing with girlish freshness and warm-heartedness. What a picture she makes as she stops to caress a little white-frocked *bébé* who is paying a visit to her godmother the Empress! For her was arranged a match with a worthy princeling, Ferdinand of Baden, rather a wooden being, but good of core. After the marriage, however, poor Ferdinand was driven to despair by the vehement refusal of his bride to allow him access. It is even said that she made use of a young friend, one Nelly Bourjoly,

as a sleeping companion to bar the way for the disconsolate Ferdinand. In vain he coaxed and threatened, the *impasse* seemed complete, till Napoleon himself gave the recalcitrant bride a talking-to. In time, the real goodness of the ill-used bridegroom prevailed with Stéphanie, and, barring one episode of jealousy, their matrimonial affairs seem to have settled down to smooth working.

Another relative of Josephine was Emilie de Beauharnais, a schoolfellow of Caroline, and perhaps the object of admiration of Louis Bonaparte.

There is a touch of the patriarchal in Napoleon's dealings with the Princess Amélie of Bavaria, who had become the wife of Eugène de Beauharnais. Step-papa-in-law writes to her, when her health is flagging a little, to tell her to take for her infirmities a little wine without water with quite a Pauline-like solicitude. Indeed, with all, when they behaved themselves and fell into his scheme of things, the world-wonder Napoleon was ready to be benevolent, and often, with all his obduracy, was he cajoled into a lavishness which must have strained his own austerity of principle, when his womankind with kittenish greed knew where to get at his susceptibility. But if Elise and Pauline and the Queen of Naples were importunate, and obtained largesse on many occasions, Hortense, we are told, received nothing from the step-father with whom her fair young name was coupled so atrociously by the rags of English journalism.

Joseph had been a "lucky fellow" in marrying Julie Clary—a match, which, when it took place, had seemed a glowing financial accomplishment to the impoverished Bonaparte family. Even when a few short years had converted them into sovereigns, or consorts of kings, Julie, gentle, unpretentious and full of charitable deeds, maintained a hold, not only on the members of Napoleon's family, but on the subjects of her husband, the unassuming Joseph. "She was adored by the poor; we need not tell of her good deeds, for they are known to all."

Madame Mère felt always secure as she looked on Joseph's wife, who, while not dazzled, nor even elated by her queendom, yet set herself steadfastly to fulfil the duties of her great condition.

With Lucien and Jerome it was another story. Their marriages had provoked a series of deadly feuds between Napoleon and the younger men. Here his autocracy displayed itself in its unpleasant aspect; it became an ugly thing. There was not in Christine Boyer, Lucien's first wife, any intrinsic ill, but she was out of the picture of the family development. Even the impoverished refugees of Corsica might look for something better in alliance than the daughter of an inn-keeper. Napoleon's procedure was, none the less, arbitrary and irrelevant. He was not as yet a potentate who could claim direction over subjects, and his arrogation of power over the head of Joseph, the eldest of the family, and of the Signora Letizia, the bridegroom's mother, was a piece of illogical dealing quite lacking in that

dazzlement which could disguise the crudity of other promulgations, upon which, fresh-minted from his genius, Napoleon made men fix their blinded eyes.

Christine Boyer was a daughter of the South; her dark skin and graceful carriage alike were the dower of her native air. Simple, yet with a heart of gold; without ambition, and tremulous before her new dignities of the 18th Brumaire, she yet, with the adaptability of women, and with the ardour of affection towards her husband, rose to the occasion. Her outward embellishment was taken into the hands of the first modistes of Paris. We find Mme. Lucien entertaining in the capital. Her affectionate nature was rejoiced by the relenting of the First Consul. Joyfully she ran to a sympathetic elder friend, that Mme. Permon who knew so much of the inner life of the Bonapartes. She lived in tender family affection with her husband and their daughters in their country house of Plessis-Charmant. Her kindly gentle life was cut short by premature maternity and medical mismanagement. After a trying illness, she left the little family whom she had loved so dearly. The unhappy Lucien scarcely preserved his reason. He erected a mausoleum for her on the estate at Plessis-Charmant, and at this final resting-place the sad father would kneel with the motherless daughters. There were onlookers, says Mme. d'Abrantès, who found these visits an absurdity, but the warm-hearted Duchesse herself was not among them.

If Lucien's first marriage had evoked dissatisfac-

tion, his second produced a perfect tornado of discord. The conqueror was more than ever keen on rendering the family fortunes accordant with the glory of the most illustrious of the Bonapartes. Mme. Lucien the second was a divorced person, and for such Napoleon had a distaste of the most extreme kind. He was, therefore, absolutely implacable towards the culprit and towards the mother who sympathized with Lucien. For her maternal partisanship, Letizia Bonaparte was under the cloud of her son's displeasure for some time. She was absent from the coronation, though things were afterwards patched up to a sufficient extent to allow of the introduction of her figure into the command picture of the event painted by Gérard. Poor Signora Letizia! her name had a sad incompatibility with her many sorrows. Torn between her maternal love and pride in her sons—she must in her inner soul have known the sword. Napoleon was not satisfied with displaying his resentment within the family circle—he made the matter an affair of state—so quickly had the new dynasty rooted itself. "Never," said he at a Cabinet Council, "will I give countenance to or receive the wife of my brother Lucien."

Lucien resisted every effort made to part him from the widow Jouberthon. She made him a tender and unselfish wife, even ready to sacrifice herself that he might gain a crown from his brother, but Lucien stood firm. Perhaps it was their best fortune that they fell into the hands of the English

as they fled from France by sea, and were for some years prisoners of war in this country.

Jerome, no less than Lucien, had incurred the anger of the o'ermastering brother. As a mere stripling of nineteen, he had married the daughter of a New York banker, one Mr. Patterson.

The Pattersons were not, it appears, in ignorance of Jerome's position as a minor in making a marriage without leave under French domestic law. They took their risk. Elizabeth Bonaparte was soon to know herself under the description of "the person calling herself the wife of my brother Jerome Bonaparte." She was, under the law of France, non-existent as a wife, though expecting to be a mother. Jerome had always been a tiresome coxcomb, and over this latest act of his insubordination Napoleon was implacable.

Napoleon, too, hated foreigners; possibly *l'Américaine* was detestable to him for the cause of her nativity. The English, again, were a special aversion; the little grey island, lashed by the rodent seas, withstood him when Continental peoples had succumbed. He would himself have alleged that there was exaggeration in the tale of his animosity, and so there may have been; still, there was a core of truth, and the revolted Colonists of the New World were still too closely akin to the mother people to be acceptable to the First Consul of the French. To-day, it is a little hard to believe that we are of such close kin to our Transatlantic neigh-

bours, but a century ago they were less remote. Yet, in the very land of the unacceptable Elizabeth, Napoleon's own brothers and nephews were to find a domicile. And, most absorbing reflection of all —did Napoleon himself but live to-day, where would he find his nearest kind in many of his salient points: his pervading energy, his intimacy with detail and the intense activity of cerebration which have made him a figure without counterpart? It would be among the children of the great republic which numbered among its earliest immigrants the family of Elizabeth Patterson. Napoleon's genius had for its chief display the field and the erection of Imperialism; who can say that, in this day of ours, he who sought to run Europe as a vast department-store might not, as a despot of finance, have made "the Street" to tremble?

The marriage was not annulled without some opposition from the clericals; the situation bore some likeness to that of Mrs. Fitzherbert and the Prince of Wales, valid in religion if not in law. It was civilly a nullity, and young Jerome Napoleon, born at Camberwell, had no status of French legitimacy. Later, Napoleon thawed, felt that he had been harsh towards Elizabeth, and Jerome, being now King of Westphalia and safely married to the Princess Catherine of Würtemburg, Napoleon granted a pension to the ex-Madame Jerome. From her valid spouse, Elizabeth had declined an offer of alimony; contempt for his easy surrender of her had bitten into her soul. Jerome somewhat pettishly com-

plained that she accepted his brother's offer yet declined his own. The bitter tongue darted its quick reply: "I would rather take refuge beneath the wings of the eagle than dangle from the bill of a goose!"

Jerome's queen was a great contrast to his first partner. We see her, a girl of nineteen, arriving in France as a bride, having been previously married by procuration. A little dowdy in comparison with the brilliant French court ladies who received her, the *nuance* of her white moire dress out of date among Parisians, battling with her timidity and with the consciousness that Jerome was so far nothing to her but *un homme dont la première femme était vivante et investie de ses droits d'épouse et de mère.* Her German *entourage* had been dismissed two days before. Jerome arrives to conduct her to the Emperor and Empress, from whom she received a kindly and almost paternal reception. With a splendid heart she stood by her husband, and even when her father sought to separate her, in the days of the Napoleonic downfall, from Jerome, Catherine clung to the husband she loved in his misfortune as deeply as in his days of splendour. She is, we think, the truest woman-soul among them all.

As we look backward through the intervening century to the family group of the Bonapartes themselves, we are startled by a sudden revelation of their likeness to a company of Pagan deities. Rome dreamed her gods into being in form much the same

as those of these Corsican descendants of ancient Italy. The beauty, the autocracy, the martial clangour, the streaks of *naïveté* and childish petulance, and the erotic adventurousness are all in the picture. Juno, Venus, Minerva, Mars, and the Father of Olympus, the concepts of a classical mythology, seem personified in these island-dwellers sprung from the bosom of an Italy which, even to this day, is tinct with Pagan heritage.

Subman and superman, said Nietzsche of Napoleon. He the centre, the incandescent core of the nebula which flamed through Europe, is not his figure kindred to those heroic incarnations which the classic *muthos* evolved from the conjunction of "gods made in their own image" with daughters of men for whose loveliness they had condescended to gird themselves with mortal envelope of flesh?

IX

THE *FEMMES FORTES*

MADAME DE STAËL, whom he disliked, whom he feared, with a fear strange to witness in such a temperament, was for Napoleon an influence far more troublous and pervasive than were the greater number of the women with whom he had relations. With his wives he could deal as the domestic autocrat; of the ephemerals he could make short shrift; but Madame de Staël, decried as a woman, odious as a Féministe, fretted the conqueror for many a year and in a multitude of ways. From the beginning she was obnoxious to him; towards her he was for long a tyrant and a persecutor. Upon him, she, on her part, turned with wrathful retaliation. Yet was there a great gulf fixed between their respective methods of hatred. For Mme. de Staël did not begin at all by hating the young general, the rising star of the Directoire. Quite otherwise. One of the most acutely-driven points in M. Paul Gautier's valuable and interesting study on Mme. de Staël's relations with Napoleon [1] is that of insistence upon the early admiration, the romantic ardour even, of the Baroness for the apostle of liberty.

[1] *Madame de Staël et Napoléon.* P. Gautier.

At the time of Bonaparte's marriage in 1796, Mme. de Staël was thirty years of age. Estranged from a spendthrift husband, she had thrown her emotional force into a liaison with Benjamin Constant, whom at times she rendered dizzy by her strenuous mentality. She was, indeed, we gather, rather a tiring friend. The confusing hubbub of effervescence must have been felt overwhelmingly in her vicinity. Her temperament was a misfortune to herself. As with other women of unusual calibre, her tragedy lay in the introduction into the feminine constitution, with its necessities of romantic aspiration, of those quasi-masculine faculties which reduced her charm for the more strenuous type of the male being. It was Rocca, the amiable and somewhat invertebrate Rocca, who loved her with sentimental and romantic ardour. For the man of more vigorous mentality, or harder temperament, she was deficient in attractive power.

It was but a short time before the vehement mentality of the Baroness brought her to clashing-point. While she was soaring in the atmosphere of liberal reform, the First Consul was beginning to reveal the cloven foot of autocracy; her disillusionment lashed furiously upon the rock of his imperturbable dictatorship. Yet Bonaparte, in the earlier stages at all events, was disposed to conciliation. "What is it she wants, repayment of her father's security?" for Necker had deposited two million francs in the Treasury as surety-money upon the candidature of Benjamin Constant as tribune. "Well then, I

will pay it." "What is it then? A permit for domicile in Paris? She shall have it." But no, the Baroness is restive. Yet, as M. Gautier clearly indicates, she had no supporters among the other parties of the moment. Neither to royalist nor to Jacobin was she *persona grata.* Nevertheless, with Bonaparte virtually her only stand-by, she seizes upon this moment of all others in which to attack the Dictator "et elle s'étonne que Bonaparte s'irrite!"

The century opened with thunder. Paris herself was rumbling, in some quarters, against Bonaparte. The man "who had never loved opposition" was soon in a white squall of resentful anger. Tongue and pen, his own and those of his agents, were on fire with recrimination; with resentful self-justification. With these generalities, however, we have not to deal. Mme. de Staël was between the fires of journalistic and social obloquy. The public prints were staring with her name and with ribald anecdote. Infinitely more harrowing—for a woman and a hostess—ten of the guests invited to a dinner given by her in honour of Constant made excuses. The dogs of war were loosed upon her. She might, with discretion, have saved the situation; now, all the rancour of the First Consul, risen to a head, foamed out upon her. Through Bonaparte's intervention she found herself deserted by the habitués of her social entertainments; daily, things became worse; "le vide peu à peu, se faisait autour d'elle." As she sat neglected in a corner, at an evening party, one heart

more compassionate than the rest was moved at the spectacle of her isolation. One of the guests, Mme. Custine, moved over to her, with kindly words. In after years the authoress gave to her heroine Delphine the Christian name of the tender-hearted fellow-guest.

Having thus involved herself in the toils of hostility, the Baroness turned for succour to the very hand she had wounded. She waylaid the First Consul, beheld him with proud *insouciance* entering into official residence at the Tuileries. "Beholden to none," he ascended the steps of the palace amid the plaudits of the crowd. "He did not even see her as he passed; she remained stunned, scarcely able to draw breath."

Then Napoleon gave a final stab to the adversary: "Let her be judged as a man!"

Here was his ultimatum of distaste, for in woman the ultra-feminine alone was tolerated by Napoleon.

At this crisis, Necker himself came forward. His millions might give him confidence in many emergencies; his prestige was fully exploited by his daughter. "What an odd set were those Neckers!" said Napoleon once in retrospect—"for ever floundering in mutual admiration, each burning incense at the other's shrine!"

At this critical moment, when already it seemed doubtful if Necker's intervention could yield anything, it came about that his daughter poured her ultimate oil upon the flames by plunging into literature. "Writers had a difficult time of it under

Bonaparte," says the author herself. Yet her own eyes must have been filled with dust, or she must, with complete perversity, have worn a glass eye to turn towards the signal, when she started in her work *On Literature* to tilt on the printed page with an already exasperated enemy. What did she expect from it? asks M. Gautier, and he tells us how Napoleon, recalling an attempt to read the work, scathed it by a memory of its verbiage, its "big words indeed, but I could not grind any meaning whatever out of these ideas, credited with such profundity." It was a far more crushing dictum than all the outcry as to its revolutionary propaganda which flushed the channels of the press.

The book was, in short, a *résumé* of everything antipathetic to the Dictator. "It hurled the glove at the First Consul in the name of the Revolution."

Within a short time of the appearance of the work, Necker and Bonaparte met at Geneva. M. Gautier gives in Chapter VI a graphic and entertaining account of the interview and the respective impressions produced by "Necker, corpulent, énorme," and "le maigre et ardent Bonaparte": but we are concerned with the daughter, not the father. No sooner had Bonaparte left Paris than the Baroness was hotfoot on the enemy's track. Watching from Coppet, she gives evidence of the warring forces within her. Her own assertiveness, her quasi-sibylline pose as high-priestess of liberty, and her obsession by the all-conquering egoism of the hero tear her being. The suave retreat by the lake-side calms her to some

extent. With effervescence much allayed, she returns to Paris in the winter of 1800.

She keeps up a vigorous correspondence with Mme. Récamier, and drags Constant at her heels through the maze of social dissipation in the capital. So it goes on—she passes between her Swiss retreat and Paris. The thunder growls along the months. In 1802 Bonaparte is shining out in the culminating radiance of his splendour, and Mme. de Staël is widowed. Her husband, a matrimonial figure-head, dies, almost suddenly. All through, there seems to have been in Mme. de Staël a visionary confidence that she would compel Bonaparte to admiration, even, it might happen, to conviction. Grotesque delusion! He sent a warning that it would be as well for her not to return to Paris after her summer outing in Switzerland. He only wanted to be quit of her, and she cried still upon the housetop to invite his attention. We might almost, in a ribald aside, declare that she laid herself out for a black eye. We have been loosely prone to over-pity for her wrongs at the hands of the Dictator, but careful scrutiny compels the admission that her buzzing had resounded to distraction in his ears before Bonaparte smashed the aggressive queen-insect.

"During the autumn [of 1803] I believed myself," says the Baroness, "forgotten by Bonaparte. . . . I arrived at a little country-seat I owned ten leagues from Paris . . . I only wished to see my friends there and to go now and then to the theatre." Would she indeed have contented herself with so mild a

programme? Bonaparte was not going to give her the chance of an experiment; he and she could not share the atmosphere within so small an area. So Madame receives an intimation that she is to retire to a greater distance, and that a military guard will be sent shortly to convey a formal warrant. Yet in the face of this, breathlessly listening, as she herself owns, for the trot of a mounted messenger, the Baroness accepted the invitation of Mme. Récamier to visit her at her country château at St. Brice, within two leagues of Paris. Having thus incensed the enemy by eight leagues of increased proximity, the Baroness still believes that the edict may be annulled, in virtue of her plaints; and she continues to urge Joseph and Lucien Bonaparte to smooth down the irate god of the machinery. Her fervent imagination has stunned all logical faculty. With her friend Juliet, then, she spent a few days of calm. Ominous tranquillity!—it was the airless silence before the thunder. Yet for all her self-deception, the aggressive lady trembled, in a corner of her consciousness, even after her return to her own more distant residence. There, seated one afternoon at a meal with some friends in a room which looked out on the entrance-gates, she saw a man on horseback draw rein, heard him ring the bell. She is convinced of his errand, though led to await an escort in uniform, while this man wears a harmless russet suit. In the garden, radiant with sunshine and fragrant with flowers, she went to meet this ill-omened Hermes, who introduced himself as military com-

mandant of the Versailles guards. He produced a letter signed by the First Consul ordering the banishment of Mme. de Staël to a distance of forty leagues from Paris—and that within twenty-four hours.

In the boundaries of a chapter we are not going to follow Mme. de Staël through the years of banishment, with their vexed, resentful outbursts on her part, and the disdainful relentlessness on the part of Napoleon. It was not banishment nor political misfortune which held the true essence of the victim's woe. No, we are again forced back on the earlier deductions.

There was ever with Mme. de Staël a sense of abortion, of falling short. Her intellect and her amative temperament desired alike an equal mate. Napoleon, however, was the last to whom a Corinne should have looked for an admiring glance; yet, because the feminine does not appear to be at ease unless looking upwards, Madame de Staël was unsatisfied by the devotion of the lesser man. The delicate attentions of Rocca could not enthral in her waking hours her whose dreams had been of the eagle.

We turn from this robust personality to that delicate Julie whom she loved with such an ardour of friendship, and from whom she, in turn, received such steadfast, though undemonstrative, attachment. There is none among us but is familiar with Mme. Récamier from one or another representation in pictorial art. She looks upon us from the walls of the

Louvre, resting with such a tenderness of simple modesty on her straight, classic couch, that she makes the voluptuous beauty of Canova's Pauline Bonaparte seem even vulgar—though she reclines in marble in Eternal Rome, and Mme. Récamier in the civic galleries of the French republic.

She, down to the tapering foot, is the white lily "or ever the soil has smutched it," plucked and laid unsoiled and dewy-fresh on David's canvas.

She loved white raiment and pearls, we are told, and never wore the diamonds which were the property of the wealthy banker's wife. Yet, for all her quasi-maidenly reserve, there was a resolute fibre beneath the exterior softness of Mme. Récamier. When the crash came upon the banking-house which meant for her husband and herself almost total ruin, she sat that night at her table entertaining friends, with never an indication of the stroke which had befallen them. When the luxury, the refinement in every detail which had surrounded her from birth, were suddenly shorn from her existence, she kept the unimpaired fineness of her exquisite exterior. No wonder that Madame de Staël, writing to pour out sympathy, should wind up with the rhapsodic *envoi:* "It is with the utmost reverence that I kiss your enchanting face!"

It was this woman whom, in the dawning of his Empire, Napoleon wished to include in his *système de fusion,* by giving her a place about the palace; and she it was who, quite modestly and courteously, yet quite determinedly, refused the advances made

through Fouché. Did she fear a snare? Fouché had affronted her delicacy with his presentment of the Emperor's need for a pure and noble attachment.

When Caroline Murat gave Mme. Récamier a pass for her box at the Théâtre Français, it is said that the terms in which it ran occasioned some uneasiness to the recipient. She did not use the box, says one; another chronicler shows her occupying it on two occasions, and submitting to prolonged scrutiny through the Emperor's opera-glasses. Mme. Récamier did not pass under the Emperor's influence. Whatever form of dominance he may have contemplated, she kept herself beyond the boundary, yet with the same serenity as marked her course in general life.

Lucien Bonaparte's romantics she disposed of shortly; she played no Juliet to his Romeo. A delicate smile may have played about her lips, there was no bitterness to curl them in that gentle breast. She was to be loved by a Prince of Prussia, who would have paid her the ultimate honour and devotion of legal marriage, for even the Catholic Church might have been approached for a declaration of nullity of marriage in the case of the *pro formâ* association of the elderly Récamier and his girl-bride. But the gentle hand would not inflict a wound so deep on the friend of a lifetime. Récamier appealed not vainly to her mild soul. She turned from the vision which, for a moment, had allured her contemplation, and fell back once more into the even tide of her virginal existence.

With regard to Napoleon's attitude towards the delicate Juliet, speculation is somewhat baffled. Did the masterful desire of ruling everywhere prompt his advances to the young wife? Did he resent exclusion from the favour she bestowed so charmingly both on the men and on the women of Paris? Did he merely consider her as a useful instrument for his *système de fusion?* Why did he devise such special wiles by the agency of Fouché to win over the fair young citizen? Vulgar sex intrigue was, of course, an impossible suggestion to this stainless creature: yet how entirely incompatible with his general trend was the proffered intellectual fellowship; an Egeria for Napoleon;—it is a mere grotesque.

Beside her it is that Napoleon's texture shows up at its worst, with every coarser fibre grinding itself against our vision.

X

THE MYSTERY OF MADAME X——

It is in the early days of the Empire that we light upon this puzzle. Who was Madame X——? Chroniclers, a few, have spoken as if they knew all about the lady and her liaison with Napoleon; others have displayed a curious anxiety to keep her name, if not the amour itself, a secret. Why this tenderness? So great a solicitude, or the show of it, for a lady's reputation is not exactly the rule at the date of the First Empire.

Let us study this heroine and the episode from the points of view of several observers. We shall meet with diversity enough to puzzle us. First we may hear the story from one of Josephine's ladies. Madame de Rémusat calls her Madame X——, and tells us of the infatuation of Prince Eugène for her. Fair of hair and complexion, she was, at the time of her first appearance at Court, about twenty-five years of age. "Her blue eyes were expressive of everything save candour." Her aquiline nose was rather long. (Josephine said contemptuously that, with a nose of that length, one shouldn't play the part of Roxalana.) Her form was slight, almost too slight indeed, but elegant and of medium height. With no special gifts of intellect, she yet was not deficient

in a certain craftiness; her temperament was placid and her emotions not easily aroused.

Married to a husband much older than herself, Madame X—— appeared at Court about 1805, and soon attracted the notice of Napoleon. The Emperor took the opportunity of visits to the play, which he made in Josephine's company, to chat with Madame X——. She, with cold complacency, preserved an aspect of indifference, yet used every art of dress, of glance and gesture to give encouragement to her imperial admirer.

The Empress, taking notice of the Emperor's abstraction, and divining an *affaire*, had at first suspected the Maréchale Ney of being the favoured beauty. She was early cured of her error.

Josephine took the matter greatly to heart, and did not conceal her feelings. She openly reproached her husband, who received her expostulations in very bad part, saying that she grudged him the least amusement. By way of temporizing at this juncture, the Emperor indulged in a spell of rather noisy fun with all the Court ladies—"he lavished on us the speeches of his *sauvage galanterie*." Madame X——, meanwhile, restrained herself from any response that might betray her to the watchful eyes of Madame de Rémusat or others; she uttered an occasional monosyllable, but no more.

Josephine, at the other end of the salon, alone and sad, looked on from a distance at the card-players, listening to their badinage. Her grief was intensified by her knowledge of the suffering which her

son Eugène was undergoing in consequence of his step-father's attraction towards Madame X——. The lady had perhaps—so hazards Madame de Rémusat—boasted jestingly to Napoleon of the Prince's infatuation. Wishing to draw a herring across the trail, the Emperor contrived that his brother-in-law, Murat, should feign an *empressement* in connection with the lady. The Empress was not deceived. She even went the length of suborning employés of some of the Paris shop-keepers in order to secure information by their medium. Poor Josephine, indeed, gave herself away like any shop-girl—her son did contrive to maintain an appearance of calm on the surface of his tribulation.

We can find nothing whatever distinctive about the quarrels of the Emperor and Empress over Madame X——. They have been heard in the shop-parlour a thousand times. At length—*Junonis ob iram*—the final shaft was hurled. Josephine announced her intention of denying to the offending goddess the *entrée* to her own apartments.

The Emperor, heckled and angry, was quick to bring the intrigue to a head. The Court was suddenly ordered from the Tuileries to La Malmaison, where greater facilities were afforded for the climax. It was a sudden transit; two hours only, declares one narrator, were given for preparation. It was in the depth of winter . . . and there was not even time to warn the caretaker to light fires in the royal apartments. "So we left the Tuileries, where we were

in an oven, to go to La Malmaison, which was a perfect icehouse." And here Josephine played the spy like any jealous shop-woman. With an attendant who had sat up, trembling with cold and wrapped in a counterpane, the Empress watched through a glazed door to see her husband steal to the midnight interview. When her bitter doubts had been only too well confirmed, she returned to bed and, we may well believe, to a sleepless night. She was, poor woman, not the light-hearted and light-mannered bride of '96. Now years were beginning to tell on her; there had been already whispers of divorce; Napoleon was irked by her confirmed sterility. The actresses, dancers, opera singers might have been reckoned with, but here was a Court lady who might become the *maîtresse-en-titre* and a far greater disturber of her peace than all the fleeting femininities who had gone before. Napoleon, too, was now resplendent with a lustre which she had not foreseen in the ardent young Corsican of ten years earlier. She had seen her son suffer for love of the Court *intrigante;* she had seen him dispatched by his step-father on a foreign mission in order that his presence should be no bar to the affair; still more, perhaps, to testify to the Emperor's displeasure at his having presumed to raise his eyes to the same lady as he had himself found desirable. But Josephine was, although she did not know it, already about to see light through the forest. Probably, desire being assuaged, Napoleon became the victim of the ordinary reaction. He soon, at all events,

began to find Madame X—— a nuisance, and his own infatuation contemptible. And then came a revolution, a turning of the tables, which was almost comic in its childishness. Napoleon, in a moment of softness, returned to his kindlier attitude towards the Empress, and before long he had confided to her his weariness of the episode, and engaged her to rid him of Madame X——. It must have been a moment of triumph for the Empress. She readily agreed to overlook the affair, stipulated merely that she should have a personal interview with the erring lady. Her method provided the most complete humiliation for the offender, while preserving for the Empress herself an attitude of dignity. She represented to Madame X—— the dangers she had brought on herself by her "frisky" behaviour, and, enjoining her to be more cautious in future, she promised for her own part to overlook the matter. Madame X—— had need of all her resources of finesse and calmness of demeanour. She succeeded in disclaiming the necessity for the Empress's warning, and in hiding her sorely-wounded vanity (for from love, says one contemporary, she had no impulse). Napoleon himself did not refrain from allusion to the affair and its passing. The indelicacy of his comment doubtless filtered through to the object of it. The bitter sediment of this adventure of gallantry must have flavoured the lady's cup for some time to come.

Now we may ask—Is Madame X—— to be identified with the Madame of eight asterisks to

whom the Duchesse d'Abrantès refers in a story connected with olives? There is certainly a connecting-link in the fact that the heroine in each case is the object of attention on the part of Murat. But what a different complexion is put upon the heroine and her story by these two memoir-writing Court ladies! Madame de Rémusat, it is clear, regarded Madame X—— as "a cat" (there is no term so succinct), while Madame d'Abrantès saw in the lady of eight stars a woman of tone, charm, and the object of an almost ethereal love on the part of a man not given to the softer emotions. Here is her story of the olives. The Emperor had manœuvred all the evening at the Tuileries to get near to the eight-starred attraction. At the supper-table she was seated next to the Duchesse d'Abrantès (Madame Junot she then was), when the Emperor came behind the pair and, leaning on the backs of their chairs, began to talk with much urbanity to the Duchesse, in order, says that lady, to cover the real aim of his proximity. ("It is astonishing," declares one lady of the time, "how quickly the Emperor assumed the demeanour of the past monarchy; it was as a very Bourbon that he lounged behind the ladies' chairs!")

In a little dish, such as would be used for radishes and *hors-d'œuvres* generally, were some olives. The lady beside Madame d'Abrantès stretching out her hand to reach this dish, the Emperor placed it before her.

"But," said he, "you do wrong to eat olives at night—they will make you ill."

Madame d'Abrantès listened with all her ears. The Emperor concerning himself about a lady's health—here indeed was something new!

"And you, Madame Junot," continued the imperial host, "are you not eating olives?—you are wise not to imitate Madame X——, wise indeed in every sense, for is she not inimitable?"

The tone of the Emperor's voice betrayed his feeling. The lady of the olives cast down her eyes, and sat blushing with the excitement and the embarrassment of a compliment so moving. The episode had been marked by other eyes. A few days later, the Empress, in her own private room, sounded Madame d'Abrantès upon the subject, covering her real design by allusions to the attentions of Murat to the lady under discussion. Madame d'Abrantès met the situation with *aplomb*. With an ingenuous air she answered the Empress's questions, and expressed her admiration for the beauty and good style of the lady under discussion. Josephine was seething with distress and resentment, and picking up a book, she said that all the women had got it into their heads that they were like the heroine." This was the story of Louise de la Vallière, a romance then at the height of fashion.

Madame d'Abrantès was "taking notes." Visiting the rooms of several of the Court ladies, she was moved to laughter, for, on the little table beside

each bed, the flagrant novel displayed itself. Penetrating into the room of Madame ********, there again behold the inflammatory work! It was all childish, school-girlish, indeed; yet the Duchesse still expands upon the fresh and glowing sentiment of the Emperor for the heroine of the episode of the olives.

Again, are we to identify Madame X—— with that Madame D—— so vaguely remembered by Napoleon's valet that he puts the affair back into the Consulship, and on whose account he was commissioned by the Emperor to take a house in the *Allée des Veuves* where the pair might meet in secret? It seems that the first to give her a name was the compiler of a *chronique scandaleuse* of later years.[1] Here she is identified with Madame Duchâtel, one of the Court ladies, and later memoir editors have given her the same description. The *chronique scandaleuse* must always be handled with suspicion. However, let us assume that, though viewed by very different eyes, Madame X—— and the lady of eight stars are identical, and that she also is rightly Madame Duchâtel. (M. Turquan does not hesitate to name her, though M. Frédéric Masson contents himself with reducing her asterisks to three.) If we do this, there is a very big question in the way. It is this. When Napoleon, in 1810, formed the household of his young Austrian bride, he did so with an almost paternal solicitude and caution. Yet Madame Duchâtel appears on the list

[1] See on this point Lévy's *Napoléon Intime.*

of her ladies. Is it conceivable that a being so autocratic, and at the same time so particularly bent on a special weeding-out, would have retained the services of a lady whose presence might have roused inconvenient reminiscences and gossip in the Court; a woman, too, of whom, if she were indeed Madame X——, he had years before sickened, and who would be for him an irksome reminder of a passage which in his own retrospect he visited with self-contempt? It is curious also to find Madame Duchâtel calling on the Empress Josephine at La Malmaison after the divorce.

No! we still feel that we would rather not accept the identification, in spite of the eight stars of the Duchesse d'Abrantès and the rest. Nor is it a gracious task to pass in review the other ladies who might be made to fit in one way or the other into the pattern of Madame X——, alias Madame ******** (if these are identical), or rather into the widely differing moulds cast respectively by Mesdames de Rémusat and d'Abrantès. We prefer to leave the unimportant mystery where it stands.

XI

WALEWSKA

NOVEMBER 27, 1806, 2 a.m., Napoleon at Meseritz writes to the Empress Josephine at Mayence :—

"I am about to make a tour through Poland. This is the first town there. To-night I shall be at Posen, and shall then send for you to come to Berlin, so that you may arrive there the same day as I. . . . My affairs prosper. The Russians are in flight."

Two days later he writes at noon from Posen :—

"I am at Posen, capital of Great Poland. . . . I am about to take a circuit round Poland. My troops are at the gates of Warsaw."

The Polish Countess Potocka (pronounce Pototska) tells in her *Memoirs* how high through all Warsaw excitement ran at the prospect of the coming of Napoleon: the Liberator, as Polish hopes depicted him. When the first French regiment marched in through the gates of the city, Warsaw went crazy with joy. "The whole town was lit up as if by magic." People fought for the new arrivals, the soldiers of the Emperor, "carried them off, vied with each other in treating them best," offered them their houses, "the cellar included." Tables were laid in the streets and

squares—in a Polish winter—and the brave army and the young, fiery Polacks got drunk together. The great man had not yet appeared, but Murat had ridden in amid roars of welcome.

By and by came the conqueror himself, riding a screw he had hired at the last relay station, and seemingly not in the best of humours. His first harangue took the Poles somewhat aback. Slapping his breeches' pockets, he told them he had the Frenchmen there. "A sort of silent surprise depicted itself on the faces of his hearers."

But this mood vanished. Napoleon had to yield to the almost furious enthusiasm which his mere presence worked in stricken Poland. Let Mme. Potocka portray for us the emotion she experienced at her first sight of him. The passage is worth citation for its historic value. The scene is one of the first receptions held by Napoleon at the palace in Warsaw. Talleyrand, as Grand Chamberlain, advances—

"with a loud and intelligible voice uttering the magic word that made the world tremble: *The Emperor!* Immediately Napoleon made his appearance, and halted for a minute as if to challenge admiration.

"So many portraits exist of this astonishing man, his history has been so much written about, all the stories told by the children of his old soldiers will live so long, that the generations to come will know him almost as well as ourselves. But what will be difficult to grasp is how deep and unexpected the

impression was which those felt who saw him for the first time. As for me, I experienced a sort of stupor, a mute surprise, like that which seizes one at the aspect of any prodigy. It seemed to me that he wore an aureole. The only thought I could frame when I had recovered from this first shock was that such a being could not possibly die, that such a mighty organization, such a stupendous genius could never perish. I inwardly awarded him *double immortality*."

In the same magnetic thraldom as the Countess Potocka all Warsaw lay. In the eyes of the Poles, passionately yearning for freedom, hoping and expecting it at his hands, the Emperor shone with a splendour more than imperial. Like some enchanter he moved among them. Never before perhaps had his glamour been so potent.

It is well known that all the ladies of Poland are beautiful; it is said that all their hearts are kind. Napoleon, seated on top of fortune's wheel, was in the full vigour of thirty-seven. It was not the affair of the Polacks that he had come to them without his wife; it was eminently their affair that he should not abide a widowed man within their borders. A liberating Emperor . . . in Poland the hospitable . . . and no care-charmer at his side. The duty of the Poles was plainer, a great deal plainer, than their sun at noonday. They took the case to their bosoms.

Did the gracious and beautiful young Marie Walewska, wife of the aged Count Anastase

Colonna de Walewice-Walewski, receive from the unseen any signal or premonishment of the fate that was silently weaving for her?

Again, where and in what circumstances did Napoleon first view this Iphigenia of the North?

M. Masson has regaled us with a pleasingly romantic history. On the first day of January, 1807, the Emperor, journeying from Pultusk to Warsaw, stayed for a change of horses at the little town of Bronia. A crowd had gathered to welcome him. Duroc, the general officer in attendance, was politely jostling his way to the posting-house when "clasped hands were raised to him in supplication, and a voice exclaimed in French: 'Ah, monsieur! help us to get away from here, and let me see him, if but for a moment!'"

The suppliants were two ladies, wedged in the throng of peasants and workmen.

"The one who had addressed him seemed hardly more than a child. She was dazzlingly fair, with large blue eyes, peculiarly sweet and candid in expression, and sparkling with a fire as of some sacred frenzy. Her delicate skin, pink and fresh as a rose, was flushed with nervous excitement. Somewhat small of stature, her figure was so exquisitely moulded, so supple and undulating, that she was grace itself. She was very simply dressed, and wore a long black veil."

Duroc, of course, "took in all these details at a glance." They are the details that are so easily taken in at a glance—and that no one ever takes

in at a glance. Twenty men in Duroc's hurry would have given us twenty different descriptions, and not one of them would have answered to a photographic picture of the scene. M. Masson's Duroc is too precise; he speaks too closely by the card.

But M. Masson goes on unflinchingly. "Extricating the two ladies from the crowd, he gave his hand to the beautiful blonde, and led her to the door of the carriage. 'Sire,' said he to Napoleon, 'here is one who has braved all the dangers of the crowd for your sake.'

"The Emperor took off his hat, and bending towards the lady, began to address her. But she, beside herself with excitement, agitated almost to the verge of delirium by her emotions, cut short his speech, and greeted him in a kind of transport. 'Welcome, thrice welcome to our land!' she cried. 'Nothing we say or do can adequately express our attachment to your person, and our delight at seeing you tread the soil of that country which looks to you for deliverance!'

"Napoleon gazed at her attentively as she uttered these words. He took a bouquet which was in the carriage and presented it to her. 'Take it,' he said, 'as an earnest of my good-will. We shall meet again, I hope at Warsaw, when I shall look forward to thanks from your beautiful lips.'

"Duroc took his place by the Emperor's side. The carriage drove off rapidly, Napoleon waving his hat from the door by way of farewell.

"The young woman was Marie Walewska."

Seldom does M. Masson, the judicious and sedate, lift us so near as this to the level of Dumas! It might be history, but the authorities are missing; it is at least a fine romantic story. The young wife, we are further told, had skipped off to Bronia, keeping the adventure a secret from her venerable husband: perhaps! The whole affair is something closer to the latitude of the Arabia of the "Nights" than M. Masson is in the habit of luring us. Briefly, the tale wants confirmation.

We must turn again to the Countess Potocka. This lady, however, it should be premised, is a witness not quite free from prejudice. The fair and gentle Walewska, she tells us, was dull: as if a dull woman could have taken this leviathan. She does far worse in writing that Napoleon had a predecessor in her affections: this, as far as may be known on any hand, is calumny.

Napoleon himself is reported to have stated that the Countess Walewska (who, at this date about twenty-two years of age, found herself yoked to a husband older by nearly half a century) was secured for him by Talleyrand. This is in a manner confirmed by Potocka. It was at Talleyrand's (Grand Chamberlain and Minister of Foreign Affairs) that the first of the Moscow balls in the Emperor's honour was given. Napoleon took part in a square dance—

"which paved the way for his affair with Mme. Walewska. . . . We learnt afterwards that M. de Talleyrand had extended his labours as far as

managing this first interview, and smoothing the preliminary obstacles. Napoleon, having expressed a wish to count a Pole among his conquests, one of the right kind was chosen—lovely and dull. Some pretended to have noticed that, after the quadrille, the Emperor had shaken hands with her, which was equivalent, they said, to an appointment. It was rumoured that a great dignitary had gone to fetch the fair one. . . . People said a great many things they perhaps did not know, and invented at pleasure. They even went so far as to assert that Rustan, the Mameluke, had acted as lady's-maid! What is certain, however, is that we were all distressed that a person admitted to society had shown such facility, and had defended herself as little as the fortress of Ulm."

Poor Walewska! But the sparkling Potocka is signally unfair to her. Walewska's is not at all the case of a Montespan or a Du Barry strenuously scheming for the honours of courtesan-in-chief. We have other records in which a larger justice is done to the girl who, with her aged husband in the background, seems to have had a position not unlike that of a youthful widow in the society of her day. Far from springing into the net, she seems inclined at first to spurn it. If M. Masson's tale, sentimental and bordering on the lachrymose, is acceptable, we have in Walewska—with her Greuze-like and semi-virginal beauty—the victim, half terrified and wholly reluctant, of a singular clique of patriots who insist on thrusting her to the altar in the name and for the

Robert Lefèbre Pinxt.

Madame Walewska.

From the collection of A. M. Broadley, Esqr.

sake of Poland-about-to-be-liberated-by-Napoleon. Walewska's virtue is the price of Poland's liberty.

We reject this notion, as we reject the notion of Mme. Potocka that Walewska capitulated without a protest.

All credible and fair record goes to show that the girlish wife of old Walewska was full of eagerness, as her whole people were, for the freedom of the Polish fatherland. Ostensibly to give this boon to Poland, Napoleon had come. Every Polish woman must have had a heart for him that pregnant winter; and not for a moment need we doubt that a deep love of country was first among the chords to throb in the bosom of Marie Walewska at her earliest sight of Napoleon. But this consideration can be urged without the least extravagance. To conceive of the heroine as immolated, slain as a sacrificial victim, is unnecessary.

Do the fascinations of Napoleon count for nothing? A kind of passion sweeps him at the vision of this Greuze girl of Moscow, married to a snuffy septuagenarian noble—the husband of a French comedy. Without a moment of respectable delay he dives into courtship. If any trust may be reposed in the printed letters to Walewska (there are admissions, confessions, protestations which disturb our belief in them), we can but say that he flings himself into this amour with an abandonment that recalls the honeymoon by post or courier with Josephine.

Napoleon, autocrat at this hour of an empire to

which he adds an arch or so daily as a breakfast egg, writes or does not write these insensately effusive billets-doux. But over the Walewska of twenty-two he gains an absolute ascendency, crushes down all her scruples; and the devoted young patriot, never for a moment abandoning her country's cause, is presently also the enchanted and enamoured mistress.

Napoleon, on his part, has the air of a man not smitten merely, but utterly engrossed. Constant shows him to us on the morning after the ball "unusually agitated." The master—so the valet feigned to think—would never have done with his toilet that day: he rose up, paced the room, sat down and jumped up again continually. Luncheon over, a person of importance was commissioned to carry to Mme. Walewska the respects, vows, and entreaties of the Emperor. Concerning this person of importance the valet is silent; it was either Duroc or Prince Poniatowski. The brusque, imperious advances, we gather, were not too smilingly received; the person of importance retired, embarrassed and surprised. Next day Napoleon was "absolutely silent" at his toilet: conduct unprecedented. Unprecedented also, in his view, the behaviour of the lady must have seemed, for he had already twice or thrice importuned her by letter. We are asked, for example, to believe that the Emperor addressed himself in these terms to the girl of twenty-two:—

"There are seasons when all splendours grow

oppressive, as at this instant I but too deeply feel. How may I satisfy the desires of a heart that yearns to lay itself at your feet, when at every point its impulses are checked by considerations of the highest moment? Oh! if you would . . . you alone might overcome the obstacles that keep us apart. My friend Duroc will smooth everything for you.

"Come! oh! come. Your every wish shall be gratified. Your country will be dearer to me when you take pity on my poor heart."

If such letters as these were really written or received (and we may be certain they were received if written), it is pretty clear that the conqueror must shortly have his way. One narrative tells us that the young Countess was handed over to Mme. de Vauban, Poniatowski's mistress and "the moving spirit of the whole intrigue," who was finally to convince her that where the hearts of monarchs were concerned there were limits to the nonsense Providence would stand. But perhaps the intervention of Mme. de Vauban (who had lived at Versailles under the old *régime*, and knew the duty of a Court madam) was not necessary.

Walewska at last consented—consented to an interview. Between the hours of ten and eleven at night she would see the Emperor privately. She was shaken with emotion, and in one report we read that early on the evening of the appointment some one turned the key in her door, that there might be no escape by flight. Towards 10.30 she was sum-

moned. Muffling her fair head in a cloak, she resigned herself to the person of importance (Duroc this time almost certainly), who had one of the imperial carriages in waiting, and was swiftly driven to a privy gate of the Great Palace.

For an instant the indiscreet, obliging Constant pulls aside the curtain, that we may observe the Emperor striding to and fro in his impatience. "He scarcely left off asking me the time."

Constant, seeing the condition of the lady whom he was to introduce, must have felt some perturbation. Was this a morsel for an Emperor? She was wasted with tears; sobs choked her utterance. Even thus we may suppose some childish prey of Louis XV to have been brought to his Parc aux Cerfs! Trembling she clung to the valet's arm—and he in his valet's soul may for once have rendered thanks that fortune had not made of him an Emperor. The valet and the great personage withdrew.

May not the scene as well end here at its very opening? for, as we know,

> "Venus smiles not in a house of tears."

Constant, on guard without (how many nights of slumber did this Constant lose!), is our witness that madame "could be heard sobbing and moaning in heart-rending manner, even at a considerable distance."

This *tête-à-tête* must a little have staggered

Napoleon himself; for after all the lady had not been exactly kidnapped. Cajoled into the assignation she in some degree had been; but to a lover at the altitude of Napoleon this must have seemed the behaviour of a nun abducted by brigands. Still, although probably she knew it not, the young Walewska had taken a very safe course. Tears—as Josephine had divined even before the era of the Jews—found Napoleon weaponless. He could see no woman crying. Tact and gentleness, moreover, he had at natural command; and this interview without a rapturous moment was in equal manner without an offensive one. At least, when, at two the next morning, the curious meeting broke, Walewska was the "Marie" of her lover—and had faintly promised to return; though it seems that Constant ushered her out with the handkerchief still to her eyes.[1]

What memories she summoned up that day to the sessions of her silent thought we know not; but she kept her promise to return. Constant fancied "she would never come again"—and mere want of sleep must often by now have fed this simple hope in

[1] The secondhand account of this interview ("doubtless," as M. Turquan says, "the version current at the Tuileries"), in Vol. I of Mme. de Rémusat's *Memoirs*, may be set aside as lacking every element of the plausible. In this, the elegant young Countess is offered "a bath and some supper" (as if they had just fetched her in tights from the reeking coulisses of a music-hall), and told that she may afterwards if she pleases "go to bed"; while the Napoleon whom we have seen in a fury of amorous impatience for her coming "went on working till a rather late hour." No: this won't do at all!

him. What a procession of ladies had Constant led at dawn to one postern or another! On the whole, perhaps, his *Memoirs* are a not unfair revenge for all the sleep he missed.

But Walewska returned. There was an interval of "two or three days," and then she reappeared: the beautiful little blonde, with her blue eyes and skin of dazzling fairness. Emotion, we read, was still "depicted on her entrancing features"; but she was now at least dry-eyed and moderately calm. This second intermezzo was presumably more satisfying than the first. The midnight visits were repeated: Walewska was vanquished.

And what of the husband? We are not in a complete degree assured as to his part. His wife, it is said, separated from him in the first days of the liaison; it is also said that the Count himself "refused ever to see her again." Nevertheless some doubt remains. It is apparently beyond question that the son borne by Walewska to Napoleon (Alexander-Florian-Joseph-Colonna: May 4, 1810) was brought into the world in Count Walewski's castle of Walewice. It was at Schönbrunn that the unfaithful wife became enceinte: why did she return to her husband's home for the birth of a child that was not his? Without some renewal of interrupted relations she could scarcely have done this; yet it were strange there should be any healing of the breach in circumstances that gave new dishonour to the outraged husband. It is incredible that

Walewski accepts paternity of Walewska's[1] son by Napoleon.

Now begins the series of double-tongued letters to Josephine glanced at in an earlier chapter. Josephine at Mayence had already no doubt been put upon the scent. Napoleon perhaps knew of or perhaps suspected this. He exhausts himself in excuses to keep the Empress at the safe distance of Mayence. "I am touched by all that you tell me; but in this cold season, with roads very bad and not too secure, I cannot consent to expose you to such dangers and fatigue. Return to Paris for the winter." "It would take you at least a month to come. You would arrive ill, and by the time you were here it might perhaps be necessary to start back again: what folly this would be! . . . I am more vexed about it than you. I should have liked to spend the long nights of this season with you, but we must obey circumstances." "I fear you are greatly grieved at our separation and at your return to Paris"—he has at last got her back to Paris—"but I insist on your having more fortitude. I hear you are always weeping. Fie! how unbecoming is this. . . . Be worthy of me; show a little more character. Cut a good figure at Paris; and, above all, do be contented!"

[1] The briefest note here on what the translator of the Potocka *Memoirs* calls "this buzz of *yska's*, *owski's* and *wicz's*." It is but necessary to say that Marie Laczinska (her maiden name), conferring her hand upon Count Walewski, becomes Countess Walewska.

There are above eighty of these ingenuous epistles. The kindest interpretation of them is that with which the ever-faithful M. Lévy consoles himself. Napoleon is lying—but in how considerate a spirit! He has a new mistress, but his wife must suffer no jealousy on her account, and deceit is so easily compassed. We may admit at any rate that on the subject of his marital infidelities Napoleon has scruples to which a self-ridden and flint-hearted Grand Monarque is at all times superior. He is the first man of his exalted rank in France who goes about to hoodwink a wife in the interests of a mistress.

From Warsaw Napoleon sets forth on his campaign against the Russians. The fierce, indecisive battle of Eylau is fought (February 7–8, 1807): "the bloodiest battle fought in Europe since Malplaquet," says Dr. Rose. "What a massacre, and without any issue!" exclaimed Ney. The carnage of Eylau seems but to have whetted Napoleon's appetite for love. "Notwithstanding the thought of so many thousands lying dead or dying in the snow, his heart was with his beautiful paramour"—he who had said or was to say: "All the women in the world would not make me lose an hour." The longing to have her with him again "outweighed all his regrets for the horrible slaughter at Eylau."

He established his head-quarters at Finckenstein, and thither Walewska hastened to him. It is from this place that Napoleon writes to Josephine: "I know not what you tell me about ladies in corre-

spondence with me. I love only my little Josephine, sweet, pouting, and capricious."

At Finckenstein for three weeks Walewska kept her lover company. They took all their meals together, and from Constant we have it that on Napoleon's part the conversation was always bright, amiable, and attentive; tender, passionate, and melancholy on hers. What did the army make of it, the brave and suffering army? M. Turquan is perhaps not very far wrong in these reflections: "The rank and file, when they saw her taking drives with the Emperor and returning with him to the château, thought, with their national matter-of-fact way of looking at things, that he ought not to have had his mind occupied with such distractions, seeing how cruelly the army had been decimated at Eylau, and what privations they were then enduring from cold and hunger. They knew well enough it was not to share their sufferings that she had come to Finckenstein, and they regarded her in a light anything but favourable." Still one may feel that had she known a way to cheer the drooping ranks of the French, this gentle, warm-breathing creature would not have sat idly at her lover's knee. Hers was hardly the responsibility for Eylau.

Poland, meanwhile, had not been restored (was Napoleon ever more than lukewarm on this subject?), and we divine something sore and sad in the heart of Walewska. It is even conjectured that she at first refused to follow him to Paris. Possibly she did refuse—but not for long. She was in Paris

early in 1808, circled again by those constraining arms.

And now to Schönbrunn. After Wagram (July 1809), Napoleon went into residence in the palace of Schönbrunn, and hard by in a faubourg of Vienna he prepared a charming nest for his love. Evening by evening Constant fetched her "in a plain carriage with a coachman out of livery." The road to be traversed was indifferent, or worse, and Constant received all manner of minute instructions. "Be very careful to-night, Constant. It has rained to-day and the road will be frightful. Are you sure of your coachman, and is the carriage sound?" One night, seeking to avoid a rut, the coachman upset his fares; madame, falling on Constant, was unhurt: "She thanked me with her own peculiar charm," says the valet.

When she becomes enceinte, Constant cannot relate to us the half of Napoleon's care for her, and she herself makes little confidences to the valet in this strain: "Toutes mes pensées, toutes mes inspirations viennent de lui et retournent à lui : il est tout mon bien, mon avenir, ma vie."

The child that came to her bore, we are told, a striking resemblance to his imperial sire.

To Paris, with the infant son, the happy mother returned in 1810. She was first in "a pretty house" in Rue du Houssaye, later in Rue de la Victoire; the summer months she spent at the Château de Bretigny, Mons-sur-Orge; and it is of some interest to note that her husband's two sisters, Princess

Jablonowska and Princess Birginska, constantly chaperoned her. So far as prettiness went, Walewska was well worthy of duennas, but she needed none. No *femme entretenue* ever lived a simpler, more secluded life. As in Warsaw she had scorned the place that society would have granted her as the conqueror's Sultana, so in Paris she hid herself almost as closely as poor pent-up La Vallière had done. "None save a few Poles among the society of the day seem to have had the slightest suspicion" of her relations with the Emperor. Here indeed we have our own suspicion that M. Masson is not speaking by the card; for Josephine (albeit she was now divorced) was ignorant neither of the liaison nor of its fruit, and Josephine kept no secrets but her own. Paris, the Paris of the Court, of society, and of scandal, could not have lain in utter darkness on a subject so deliciously improper. But may we not write it a little to the credit of Walewska that she esteemed her love so highly as to vaunt it in Paris no more than she had done in Poland? And open scandal there was none. Napoleon, on his side, does not seem to have bound her in any way to secrecy. Boxes are to be reserved for her at all theatres, every place of interest in Paris is to be open to her, Corvisart is to care for her health, Duroc is to see that she has whatever she may want —and at every chance Napoleon slips from the Tuileries, like a clerk surreptitiously married, to kiss the baby after he has kissed the mother. The baby, by the way, he loses no time in creating Count.

Recipient of favours not grudgingly bestowed (we are thinking still of the wretched state in Paris of Louis XIV's La Vallière), Walewska lives remote in the Paris where her lover gazes on his own splendour, as the world gazes on it. Even in the matter of expenses—wherein a mistress is traditionally bound to shine—she takes on the whole so little heed to herself that we are rather glad of the £5 to Leroy for a lace pocket-handkerchief. Such seems Walewska in Paris.

"Do not forsake me at my end," runs a line of the *Dies Iræ*. On that black night[1] in April 1814, at Fontainebleau, when, half-demented by the "maddening tumults" of mind that followed on the signing of the first abdication, the dethroned and deserted Emperor poured out the opium he had carried in a phial from Moscow, Walewska was keeping vigil in an ante-chamber. Not so the wife, Marie Louise!

Also what visitor to Elba is this, whom, on a moonlit night of September, Marshal Bertrand assists out of a rowing-boat at the pier of Porto Ferrajo: a lady unknown, with a little boy at her side? Along the Mariana Road, bathed in moon-rays, comes Napoleon "riding on a white charger" —but not the Emperor beheld of Heine in the

[1] What *was* the precise night of this attempted suicide? Thiers and Constant agree in assigning it to the night of 11th or 12th. Dr. Holland Rose, following Fain and Macdonald, refers us to the next night. It is a pity we have no memoirs of Mme. Walewska.

avenue of the Court garden at Düsseldorf. For the lady too there is a horse led by a mameluke, and she mounts and rides with the Emperor. The moon drops among the clouds, and in the darkness the lady and the Emperor ride on alone to the Hermitage, where in the garden a tent stands beneath a chestnut-tree.

"The unknown remained two days and two nights, making no appearance, and the Emperor showed himself twice only, to give some orders. The child went for walks with one of the men composing his suite. He appeared to be about four or five years old, and was dressed in the Polish fashion."

The lady went away, and the islanders said: "It was kind of the Empress Marie Louise to come and see the Emperor." But the fallen Emperor had no visit from Marie Louise.

XII

MARIE LOUISE

"THE amazing marriage," were not this title Mr. Meredith's, would fitly describe the match between Napoleon and the Archduchess Marie Louise of Austria. "It was his ruin," says Lord Acton. The Emperor himself is reported to have alluded to it at St. Helena as "an abyss covered with flowers." The abyss, of course, was Russia. But for this Austrian match there would probably have been no Moscow to record—and through the flames of Moscow we may dimly descry the wreck of the First Empire.

As great as he was at the time of the divorce of Josephine, Napoleon found it not the easiest matter to replace her. "He would not think," observes Dr. Lenz, "of choosing a wife among his vassals," of whom at this epoch he had rather an embarrassing number. "For him there was question only of some princess from one of the reigning families of the Great Powers." Daru had respectfully advised his master to marry a Frenchwoman, a Frenchwoman not burdened with relatives who would want crowns or backsheesh. Napoleon had replied sagaciously enough that his immediate business was to establish his influence "outside," and that a successful mar-

riage in the right quarter would be the best help to that. He had, however, to remember that, far from being a king-born king, he was a monarch without ancestors.

Hope seemed to offer of a family alliance with Russia. The Czar Alexander had two sisters to dispose of, Grand Duchess Catherine and Grand Duchess Anne. Catherine was in Napoleon's mind up to the interview at Erfurt; but she, as we know, was presently given to Prince George of Mecklenburg. Anne at this date was extremely young for marriage, but Napoleon persevered. These pourparlers were in progress while Josephine was still undivorced; couriers hastening slowly between Paris and St. Petersburg. Not in France only, but in Europe, the general opinion began to give it out as settled that Josephine's successor was the younger sister of the Czar. But St. Petersburg was dallying with the great question. Alexander made every show of amiability, but . . . the Grand Duchess Anne was so very young . . . her mother's consent was difficult to obtain . . . there was the question of the young lady's religion . . . there was also the Polish question. In the end, Napoleon grew tired. A sovereign without a pedigree, he was none the less at this hour the arbiter and umpire of Europe. It was given to the Emperor Alexander to understand that the Emperor Napoleon was no longer a candidate for his sister's hand. But before this message went to Russia, Napoleon had made sure of Austria.

In a volume published at the end of last year

(*The Austrian Court in the Nineteenth Century*), Sir Horace Rumbold says concerning this matrimonial pact: "Of many questionable transactions held to have been justified by reasons of State, this one seems in many ways exceptionally odious." Yet, once accomplished, it was regarded by both sides as a master-stroke of policy. One important person in the bargain counted for almost nothing; the victim herself, Marie Louise. Lord Castlereagh had given it as his opinion that "to propitiate the Minotaur, an Austrian maiden should be offered up." According to Meneval (*Napoléon et Marie Louise*), the maiden herself, when first the scheme was submitted to her, uttered very nearly the same words: "Se regarda presque comme une victime devouée au Minotaure."

Odious or not, the affair was certainly amazing. Had France, since the outbreak of the Revolution, been on the most devoted terms with Austria, it would still have seemed well-nigh incredible that a Bonaparte should become a son-in-law of the thrice-proud House of Hapsburg, the heirs of the Germanic Cæsars. But, in fact, what had been the relations between the two countries? In 1809 Marie Louise's father, the Emperor Francis—now just forty-one—had occupied his throne for seventeen years. During all but four of these years (since 1796, that is to say) he had been fighting against Napoleon—fighting and losing all the time. To the young Marie Louise, France was the country that had guillotined her aunt (she was the great-

grandchild of Marie Thérèse and grandniece of Marie Antoinette), robbed Austria of Italy, and abolished God. And to Marie Louise, France was Napoleon Bonaparte.

In 1805 Napoleon's victory of Austerlitz had cost Austria 28,000 square miles of territory, a population of nearly 3,000,000, and a revenue of over 14,000,000 florins. Up to this date Francis had been revered as the august overlord of the Holy Roman Empire. In 1806, "under the rude impact of the Corsican Cæsar," this historic empire vanished. A great region of Germany was become the mere vassal of Napoleon, and under the Confederation of the Rhine Francis had to declare himself simply the first of the emperors of Austria.

Austerlitz in 1805; Wagram in 1809. Once again Austria saw her capital in Napoleon's hands, and from this fresh campaign—which historians are agreed in describing as the most memorable and splendid in her annals—she emerged with a loss of 42,000 square miles of territory, 3,500,000 inhabitants, and some 11,000,000 florins of revenue. Scarcely had the cannon of Wagram ceased when the conqueror reappeared as the most amiable of suitors. The hand of Marie Louise, the eldest born of her father and his favourite child, was asked in marriage.

What did the girlish Archduchess know of this momentous offer? She knew nothing whatever. It was but a little while that she had left off playing at soldiers with her brother, when the ugliest waxen

figure on the board was christened Bonaparte, horribly wounded with pins, and heaped with maledictions. Not until within six or seven weeks of her betrothal had Marie Louise an inkling of the project.

Marie Louise Léopoldine Caroline Lucie, born in Vienna the 12th of December, 1791, was just eighteen at the end of 1809. All the daughters of her House were strictly and dully reared in sequestered chambers remote in some degree from the Court. They had their ladies and their domestics, among whom they lived, says Meneval, "avec une bienveillante familiarité." Their whole existence, up to the day of marriage, was passed "dans une retraite absolue." Practically, indeed, the young Archduchesses were cloistered. When a master gave lessons, the governess-in-chief was always present. If in some respects the education of Marie Louise was below the standard of a modern High School, it was in some other respects above this standard. An Austrian Archduchess of the period, traditionally supposed to be capable of speaking to or greeting every one in the "great Babel" of the Empire—and destined to she knew not what marriage of convenience—was quite necessarily a linguist; and Marie Louise, with some school-girl's Latin and at least a phrase or two of Turkish, was firmly grounded, as Masson says (*L'Impératrice Marie Louise*), in German, English, Czech, Spanish, Italian and French. She was crammed with history, logic, and chronology; made some progress in draw-

ing; could touch the piano agreeably; and on the harp had a tune or two beyond the solitary air upon which Josephine erected her pretensions to this instrument.

Some simple and pretty letters have come down to us from her childhood and girlhood. The most interesting of these are letters to her favourite governess, Mme. de Colloredo, and the governess's daughter, Victoire. In the severe and almost nun-like opening of her life the little Archduchess throws herself into the arms of this beloved governess. The Mme. de Colloredo of this correspondence is "maman"; the Archduchess's mother, when she alludes to that lady, is "ma mère." For her imperial father Marie Louise has a deep, half-fearful, half-romantic, and half-reverential affection. When, scarcely admitted to the scene, her eyes behold "Papa on his Throne," her very elbows shake.

By and by her girlish pen is spluttering its way into politics. She receives as a present *Plutarque de la jeunesse*—the lives of illustrious men from Homer to Bonaparte. "This last name spoils the book, and I would much rather the author had left off at the Emperor Francis" (her father), "who also has done some remarkable things . . . while the other person has simply committed injustices in depriving people of their country." Again, to Victoire, she writes: "I have just heard such a funny thing; that M. Bonaparte, when he was in Egypt and his army was completely ruined, escaped

with only two or three of his soldiers, and became a Turk. He said to the people, 'Yes, I am a Mussulman, and the great Mahomet is my prophet.' Afterwards, when he got back to France, he pretended he was a Catholic, and it was only then they made him Consul."

In 1805, when Francis was brought almost to his knees, and the Imperial family was flying hither and thither, Marie Louise thought Providence should be getting ready to intervene. "Papa must win in the end, and then will come the moment of the usurper's discouragement. I should not wonder if God had allowed him to go as far as this, so that when He abandoned him his ruin might be all the more complete."

In April 1807 her mother died, and in January of the following year the Emperor Francis took for third wife his youthful cousin, Marie Louise Beatrice of Este, who was but four years older than her step-daughter, Marie Louise.

No one in Austria more cordially detested the French Revolution and its heir, Napoleon. The family of Marie Louise Beatrice had lost the Duchy of Modena, and she herself seems to have been animated with a kind of fury against "le Corsicain." To the easy-going Francis, when the blasts of war again began to blow, the third wife was both whip and spur.

The standards of the newly-formed Landwehr were solemnly blest, Marie Louise assisting at the ceremony. Presently there are tidings in Vienna of

an Austrian victory (Eckmühl), and the Archduchess dashes off a letter to her father in camp: "We have heard with joy that Napoleon was present at the great battle which he lost. May he lose his head too! Every one here is prophesying about his coming end, and saying that the Apocalypse is meant for him. They declare that he is to die this year, at Cologne, in an inn called the *Red Crab*. I don't think too much of all these predictions, but how happy I should be to see them realized!" As M. de Saint-Amand remarks, these sentiments "are a singular preparation for the next year's wedding."

Wagram finished the campaign, and the last gun fired there was Josephine's warning to pack. When Napoleon "reappeared crowned with victory at Fontainebleau, October 26th, 1809, Josephine felt that her fate was sealed. The immediate result of the battle of Wagram was the divorce."

Marie Louise's piano-master, Kozeluch, was among the persons who talked of it. "I hear," she writes, "that Kozeluch has been speaking about Napoleon's separation from his wife, and also that he mentions *me* as her successor! He is certainly mistaken there. He is too much afraid of being refused, and too anxious to do us still more harm, to risk a demand of that sort; and papa is too good to use any constraint with me in so important a matter."

This is early in January 1810, and she writes at the same time to Mme. de Colloredo, to whom she still addressed herself as an affectionate and truth-

ful daughter to an understanding mother: "I let everybody talk; it doesn't trouble me in the least (*Je laisse parler tout le monde, et ne m'en inquiète pas du tout*). I am sorry only for the poor princess whom he chooses; I'm certain *I* shall not be the political victim."

Then in a flash it seems to be revealed to her that she, after all, is the lamb for whom they are building the sacrificial altar. "I commit my fate to Providence. Providence alone knows where our happiness lies. If misfortune wills it, I am ready to give myself up for the State. . . . I don't want to think about it, but my mind is made up. . . . Pray that it mayn't be!"

When this letter was written Marie Louise's fate was sealed. Her father had decided for the marriage. We have it on almost every hand that the Austrian princesses were to marry where and when the policy of Austria decided for them. They lived under a private coercion law. Paternal authority in this very ancient family was practically as absolute as in Israel. Metternich was deputed to submit the case to Marie Louise. He knew very well what his commission amounted to. "What are really the wishes of my father?" Marie Louise asked him. "Do not ask what the Emperor wishes," was Metternich's nice evasion: "tell me what you yourself wish." Marie Louise knew what she wished, and Metternich knew what she wished, and her father knew what she wished. She wished Napoleon dead. But she replied: "I wish only what I am commanded

by my duty to wish. It is the interests of the Empire that must be consulted, not my feelings. Ask my father to consider nothing but his duty as a sovereign." This was precisely the answer that had been looked for. Marie Louise, at eighteen, was old enough to know that it was the only answer she could venture on. Had not Metternich just written privately to his wife: "Our princesses are little accustomed to choose their husbands according to their own inclinations, and the respect which a daughter so devoted and so well brought up feels for her father gives me confidence that she will not oppose us"? Metternich reports to the Emperor Francis the issue of his interview with Marie Louise, and the Emperor replies: "I am in no way surprised at what you tell me. Knowing my daughter as I do, this is just the answer I expected."

So the most desperate marriage in history was arranged at a diplomatic gasp. In fewer than six weeks from the proper opening of negotiations the match was whirled through, and Napoleon—who danced as ill as he rode—was learning the Vienna waltz, and sending for tailors "to fit him properly," and inquiring for the lady's portrait.

Pen-portraits of Marie Louise are numerous, and some of the most elaborate are the least to be trusted. Lamartine describes her as a comely maiden of the Tyrol (she was no more of the Tyrol than of the Tiber), "blue-eyed and fair-haired, her complexion tinted by the whiteness of its snows and the roses of its valleys, slender and supple, and with

that languorous attitude of the German woman who seems to need a man's heart to lean on." Her lips this painter finds a little full, "la poitrine pleine de soupirs et de fécondité," the arms long and admirably sculptured. Her great-grandmother, Maria Theresa, was famed for the beauty of her arms and hands.

Lamartine's picture is over-limned. Metternich's, less flattering, comes nearer to historic canvases. "Her face," he writes to his wife, "is rather plain than pretty, but she has a beautiful figure; and when properly dressed and made the most of, she will do well." There was a wide space between the eyes, which were rather curiously placed. Masson remarks on the want of proportion in the lower lip ("cette lèvre démesurée"), which was rather heavy and pendulous, though it lacks the complete foolishness of the under-lip of Velasquez's Charles II. Sir Horace Rumbold imagines Marie Louise as "the perfect embodiment of German girlish beauty and freshness . . . in short, as sweet and dainty a maiden as could be." The quality of "freshness" we may accept without the least reserve. Marie Louise was fresh, sound, and winsome.

To the public announcement of the betrothal, Vienna's first response was a blank amaze. "The sudden outburst of a volcano would not have been more startling than this piece of news from a clear sky. The impression made upon the populace was one of surprise which merged in disbelief. People stopped one another in the streets to ask if it were

Marie Louise

From an old print.

possible." In as short a time as may be conceived, astonishment resolved itself into satisfaction. "All Vienna," wrote Metternich to his wife, "is interested in nothing but this marriage. It would be hard to form an idea of the public feeling about it, and of its extreme popularity."

The official announcement in the *Gazette*, February 24, 1810, ran in these terms: "The formal betrothal of the Emperor of the French, King of Italy, and her Imperial and Royal Highness the Archduchess Marie Louise, the eldest daughter of his Imperial and Royal Majesty, our very gracious Sovereign, was signed at Paris, on the 7th, by the Prince Schwarzenberg, Ambassador, and the Duke of Cadore, Minister of Foreign Affairs. The exchange of ratifications of this contract took place on the 21st of this month, at Vienna, between Count Metternich Winneburg, Minister of State and of Foreign Affairs, and the Imperial Ambassador of France, Count Otto de Mesloy. All the nations of Europe see in this event a gage of peace, and after so many wars look forward with delight to a happy future."

Stranger than anything else, perhaps, was the bedazzlement of Marie Louise's step-mother, the Empress. This lady, erstwhile Napoleon's most implacable opponent at the Austrian court, was as emphatic as any one in praise of the match. "The Empress," wrote Count Otto de Mesloy in a dispatch, "shows herself extremely favourable to the marriage."

Into this enterprise which was to provide him with an heir and carry on the State that he had founded, Napoleon, at forty-one, threw himself with a schoolboy's ardour. The brain that had bent itself to the uptilting of a world was now absorbed in chiffons, in planning the *meubles et immeubles* of the imperial bride's appanage, in heaping the *corbeille* with stately vesture and more intimate delicacy of lace and linen, meet alike for the daughter of an Emperor and for the consort of a Napoleon.

Here let us see something of the outfit which the Emperor planned for his girl-bride. The *corbeille* itself alone, of white velvet, cost 12,000 francs, the marriage robe another 12,000. Then among the court dresses we come upon one of silver tissue, another of pink tulle decorated with gems and spangles, a trained robe of *blonde*, silver and chenille. These ran into hundreds of pounds apiece.

Then there were the ball-dresses, one with violets (the Bonaparte flower) and silver in a design of architectural columns. Historic retrospect furnished a gown of pink and silver in the style of Francis I, patterned with fish-scales, and a girlish dress of white tulle would serve for the less imperial moments of the bride.

Then came a dozen evening gowns. Tulle with silver flowers and buds; white satin and pearls; a white dress, trimmed, somewhat unusually, with raspberries.

A velvet gown trimmed with double rows of

fringe on the bodice and scarf. This had descended to the moderate price of 588 francs.

The simple dresses of crêpe and tulle, with high neck and long sleeves, came to quite small prices of £14 apiece, and why one of imitation cachemire mounted to £40 is not explained.

Blonde again appears for a more sumptuous garment, and is worked in chenille with ivy leaves, and cost nearly £100; violet sprays adorned another of the simpler gowns.

Long coats were supplied in a variety of materials and of substance. The white satin with double capes, the pink satin, pink *frisé* velvet made in shawl fashion—this was a prevailing mode—and the more trivial blue crêpe appear among the number.

The simpler outdoor garments were furnished for £12 to £15 each.

Hunting outfits were designed with an eye to pageantry, such as one in white satin with golden tassels, and another in velvet with gold trimming, and, for this ornamental kind of sport, *blonde* veils were also included.

Fichus were the order of everyday attire, and these, both large and small, were there in quantity.

Sixteen dozen of gloves were not excessive for an empress, and the price at 40 francs a dozen (judged, even, upon relative values) may make modern mouths water by its moderation.

Fans, shawls of cachemire and wraps of velvet finish the more public adornment of the imperial consort.

Now we come to more hidden wonders. There were over one hundred pairs of white silk stockings —and a few cotton ones, which were perhaps for bedroom use, where we find included fichus, nightcaps and other unidentifiable items. Some of the nightcaps were of the mode "Caroline," others of "Napoleon," and one ran up to the price of 840 francs.

Dozens of underwear, embroidered and lace-trimmed, but confined to cotton and linen materials, are in the list. Some of the petticoats were of Scotch mull, though foreign goods were not loved by Napoleon.

There were nearly three hundred pocket-handkerchiefs of cambric, some lace-edged. Among the lace objects appeared a veil, a shawl of *point d'Alençon,* two dresses of *point d'Angleterre* and three shawls of the same, one of which was in a design of rose and laurel intertwined in garlands, with the monogram M.L. at each corner.

The court train of lace, at about 600 guineas, seems far removed from a fancy price. The whole of the lace cost no more than 3,000 guineas. It would be interesting to compare such items of expenditure with those in the trousseau of the recent Bonaparte bride of a prince of the royal house of Greece.

The jewels included a parure of emeralds and diamonds, in which a comb of specimen emeralds figured, and thus came to over £8,000, while the

case which held it was charged at £4 by the court jewellers.

A fine specimen of goldsmith's work was the box of graven gold for toothpicks. It was further adorned by a miniaturist with portraits of the imperial pair.

Jewelled fans, one set with diamonds, one with emeralds, were added to the simple ones of the general outfit.

A cameo portrait of the Emperor on *agate-onyx* was the work of Argenti, a famous Roman cutter. A large collection of war medals was also presented to the bride.

Victim though she was, Marie Louise, being still in her teens, must surely have felt some elation at the spectacle of such apparel for the sacrifice.

Berthier, Prince of Neufchâtel, made his State entry as marriage envoy into Vienna on March 5. On the 6th a gala banquet and masked ball at the palace—festivities often enough described. Next came the formal demand for the hand of the Archduchess, preferred by the Ambassador. On the 9th the bride-elect made her act of solemn renunciation of all her rights and claims as princess of the Imperial family of Austria. On the 11th, in the evening, in the Augustine Church, took place the marriage by procuration, the Archduke Charles standing as proxy for Napoleon.

Two days later, the 13th, Marie Louise set forth on her eventful journey to France. Some of the

incidents of this journey were not too agreeable. On the Bavarian frontier, for instance, Marie Louise was met by Napoleon's sister, Caroline Murat, Queen of Naples, who informed her, "to her infinite distress, that her lady-in-waiting, Countess Lazanska, who had been with her since her childhood, would not be permitted to proceed farther on the journey. She was to part with all she had brought from Austria." Apparently, even the little favourite Spitz had to be sent back to Vienna: Napoleon wanted no more pet dogs with a bride.

Was it partly to atone for these slights that the Emperor suddenly resolved to dispense with etiquette and ride out to meet his bride in the manner of a knight? At noon on March 27 (what a rate of progress!), as he was excitedly tramping up and down the park at Compiègne, a letter from Marie Louise was delivered to him. She was just leaving for Soissons, she said. There are two or three stories as to what followed. A familiar one is that Napoleon jumped into a carriage without suite or escort, and was driven at full speed to Soissons. This would be by no means bad for an Emperor, but what knight-errant condescends to a carriage? Napoleon was up to a trick more romantic than this, and we choose rather to conceive him scouring on horseback the road to Soissons in the guise of a messenger or courier carrying a letter to the bride. Marie Louise had never yet set eyes on him. The surprise was charmingly imagined, and ought to have succeeded: it was spoiled by an outrider too

well trained to appreciate an operatic situation. The girl-Empress and Caroline Murat were driving from Soissons in a storm of rain. The outrider, recognizing the Emperor as he reined up against the carriage, gave the cry of "L'Emp'reur!" and the secret was out. However, when the door was opened and the steps were let down, Marie Louise was kissed like any bourgeoise.

All halting-places were ignored. Compiègne was reached; the final presentment of splendid pageantry collapsed like a pasteboard scene. Alone with the bride, whose high colouring must have been dashed by the fatigue of the long hours (and by the absence of the dinner promised at Soissons, and missed by a healthy appetite such as hers), Napoleon supped. The chaperon of Naples alone made a third at the shorn feast.

As with everything else, the complementary ceremony of the nuptial benediction is waved aside. Napoleon in his wedding harks back to Henri le Grand—and the next morning boasts to his intimates that he has "anticipated his conjugal rights."

For it was not until the first day of April that the nuptials were solemnized. There were the public ceremonies of the civil marriage at St. Cloud, the State entry into Paris, the religious solemnities in the Chapel of the Louvre. Marie Louise at last was Empress of the French.

Napoleon stated at St. Helena that although the reign of his second consort was brief she ought to have enjoyed it, inasmuch as "the world was at her feet."

We note, however, that in exchanging one palace for another, the young Empress had not altogether freed herself from the nursery. Napoleon—in no spirit of distrust—surrounded her with a multitude of precautions. There is the story of the secret drawer in her bureau, which the maker of that piece of furniture was showing her Majesty how to open; while the lady-in-waiting, from motives of delicacy, had withdrawn herself from the presence. The lady did not wish to seem a pryer into secrets, but the Emperor was angry that the Empress had been left alone for that short spell. Napoleon himself, on his nuptial visits to his wife's room, must pass through the antechamber, where a lady-in-waiting slept always as guardian to Marie Louise.

She resumed her music lessons and her practising; continued to use her pencil, and received her first riding lessons, rather nervously, under the supervision of the Emperor—who may have taught her rather more than he knew, for he himself habitually bumped in the saddle. Until she had been well and truly married, by the way, no princess of Austria could learn to ride. It was a point of etiquette in the family.

Napoleon was probably not very long in learning that he had wedded a somewhat colourless young woman. Her dread of him passed almost immediately, and she told Metternich that his Majesty was really more afraid of her than she of him; yet in her feeling for Napoleon there seems to have been something bordering in an almost tragic degree

upon the commonplace. Neither fear, nor awe, nor worship, nor the glamorous obsession of passion could for one moment have visited the serene shallows of this Austrian girl-wife. "I never had romantic feeling of any kind for him," was her frank avowal in after years.

One of the most bewildering facts about these historic figures, whom the haze of our own imaginations has magnified to heroic form, is the absence of enchantment they seem to have possessed for those in next proximity. A thousand woman souls may have swelled with romantic ardour for the hero their eyes had never seen, dead long before their day; yet no single thrill has traversed the being of the woman set at the Idol's right hand. Imagination is ever the Promethean life-giver; the creature also, like its Creator, makes all things out of nothing.

Curiously or not, Napoleon himself was more than satisfied with the situation, more than pleased with the bride. He chuckled to Metternich over the grand success of his bargain, and did not tire of telling his friends that there was no wife like an Austrian.

"He came down, so to speak," says Sir H. Rumbold, "from the pinnacle to which he had raised himself and where, till now, he had dwelt sternly alone with his soaring dreams and his boundless ambition, and found a delight he had never deemed to be possible in the sober joys of married life. In short, he fell desperately in love with his young wife."

It added immensely to his pleasure in Marie Louise that she had made conquests of the redoubtable Clan! Josephine they had fought to the end, but Marie Louise "from the first unconsciously took by storm her husband's family, from the austere Madame Mère to the jealous, intriguing sisters; while from the royal sister-in-law, Catherine of Würtemberg"—wife of Jerome Bonaparte, King of Westphalia—"she won the meed of praise that 'it was impossible to see her without loving her.'" Her fancy, to be sure, was gratified at every turn; but it is fair to add that she showed tact, grace, and good nature. The Chamberlain Rambuteau says (*Memoirs*) in his kindly way: "Her very timidity added a certain grace to her; there was something so pathetically appealing about her. She inspired her surroundings with a mixture of respect and sympathy, and these sentiments, added to a general conviction of her real omnipotence, won all hearts for her. I was at every fête, and was often selected to open the balls during the time I was waiting for my special duties to begin, which they did after a journey to Trianon, whither the Emperor took the Empress to rest at the beginning of her pregnancy."

Of this great event the tidings filtered presently from the palace to the capital and the provinces. The Emperor's *bonne Louise* was admirably fulfilling her mission! There is a pathetic little touch in a letter written at this date to her bosom friend: "You know how little courage I have." She was but nineteen, she had no mother, and the father who

could pour strength into her for anything was far away. On the evening of March 19, during a *cercle* at the Tuileries, it was told the Emperor that the first symptoms had set in, but the night passed, and no climax. Betwixt night and morning of March 19–20, 1811, the Emperor with every mark of gentleness stood frequently for long spells at the bedside. At a critical moment the surgeon was flustered, and from his behaviour Marie Louise inferred the worst. "Must my life be sacrificed, only because I am an Empress?" she wailed.

"Come, Dubois," said the Emperor, asserting himself at the crisis, "don't lose your head! Think only of the Empress."

There was a half-hour of combat before which Napoleon, who had witnessed, imperturbable, the spectacle of the battlefield, sickened and fled, pale and unnerved. The warrior at least can stretch his arm against the assailant, but with what cruel odds is the mother-victim fronted! The trial was soon ended, however.

At 9.20 on the morning of March 20, guns one hundred and one boomed the birth of l'Aiglon, Napoleon's son and heir, the King of Rome. All the night past the people of Paris had crowded the churches to pray for this arrival of arrivals, and through the windows of the Empress's room Napoleon watched the joyous gestures of the crowd.

What an infinite melancholy fills this brief career! This is the Prince, Napoleon's one lawful child, who on his deathbed, twenty-one years and four

months later, said to his friend Count Prokesch-Osten: "My birth and my death—those two words are my biography: they tell my whole story." It was almost absolutely true.

Posterity has known this child and youth by three resounding titles: King of Rome, Napoleon II, and Duke of Reichstadt. Chiefly, however, it has known him as one of the unhappiest and most luckless princes born to France. His birth was "an onerous complication," wrote Lord Acton; and in sooth it was, but this there was no foreseeing. We first see the beautiful baby (beautiful he was) in his gorgeous "cradle of mother-of-pearl and gold, surmounted by a winged Victory," in which he lay to be smiled at by all. Then he comes before us in his cloak of silver tissue lined with ermine, a lovely little postulant borne to his public baptism at Notre Dame. After this fine ceremony we may behold him faring through the glades of Saint-Cloud in his gilded baby-coach drawn by two milk-white sheep.

Gérard found the child a charming subject for his brush, painting him with cup and ball in his cradle. This portrait, on the eve of Moscow, Napoleon placed on a stand before his tent; and the veterans of the Guard, as they passed before it, "cried with joy." Alas! for the baby boy: Moscow, we may say, decides his fate. "Within less than two years Cossacks were the escort of the King of Rome. When the Coalition made him a prisoner, he was for ever torn from his father. Napoleon, March 20, 1815, on the return from Elba, re-entered the palace

of the Tuileries triumphantly as if by miracle, but his joy was incomplete. March 20 was the birthday of his son, the day he was four years old, and the boy was not there." His father never saw him again.

They remembered one another, though in differing degrees of intensity. Napoleon at St. Helena is much moved on receiving a lock of the boy's hair, and a letter from him which some hand traces over the little prince's hand. With the lad himself, the memory of his father expanded into a sort of ecstatic dream. What thoughts he had of his mother we know not, for from childhood onwards till his death they were almost strangers. The growing prince, his great title gone from him, lived with his grandfather, Emperor Francis; his mother queened it in her toy duchy of Parma. But thoughts of an abiding and harassing love for his father are his chief emotional sustenance. The love is harassing, because he is always contrasting his own nothingness and his own steady physical decline with the immensity of his father and his father's relentless grip on life. As his malady of consumption deepens he is more and more impressed with the blind cruelty of his fate. He was handsome and proud and gentle, with at least a touch of Napoleon's personal ascendency. Glances followed him in the ball-room; and once when he rode to perfection a fiery horse at a review, the soldiers, "accustomed to maintain a profound silence in the ranks, broke suddenly into shouts of admiration."

It is not permitted to say that in Napoleon II we lost another great creature, for the seeds of death were laid in him at birth; but he seems to have taken to the grave some sweet and noble qualities, and "as the earth left him, he turned to heaven."

We have glanced at Moscow, and return to Marie Louise. The days of fate drew on. The glitter of the Tuileries paled and went out almost as swiftly as in the few anarchic and dissolving months that had sent to their account Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. Abdication, return, the utter *débâcle* followed one another in stifling sequence, till the tempest joined with the deluge. The Emperor was needed in the field; he appointed the Empress Regent. The daughter of the Cæsars held an office for a precedent for which the archivists sought back into the middle centuries. But her power, even of such formal kind, was short-lived. Under the advance of the Allies, she left Paris with her son and proclaimed herself in Blois, in May 1814, in empty grandiloquence upon the walls of the city. Alas! upon the very day of the *affiche* Napoleon was signing his abdication, in the desperate hope that his son would be recognized as the succeeding monarch.

The more trivial taint in the Empress peers forth in an episode at Blois. It fell to the lot of General de St. Alaire to break the news of the abdication to the Regent. He was received by her while she was still in bed, and her feet were half uncovered. "Not wishing to stare into her face in so direful a moment,

he cast down his eyes, respectful of her grief.

"'Ah!' said the Empress, 'you are looking at my foot. I have always been told it is a pretty one.'"

The general's head drooped at the banal vanity.

From this hour, it must be confessed, the sympathies of French readers are terribly against Marie Louise. She has been judged, found wanting, condemned. France has continued to regard her as the "ungrateful wife" who forsook her husband in the day of his disorder. She, to be sure, did not abandon Napoleon more hastily than he had been abandoned by the French. If she quitted Paris when the Allies were in sight, she could have pleaded the definite commands of Napoleon that their son was to be saved from the enemy. If she took ultimate refuge in Vienna, it was when she had, not virtually but actually, ceased to be a sovereign, and had passed again under the all but absolute control of the imperial father in whose will she had always sunk her own. Pray also let it be remembered that the Marie Louise of these days that would have tried the nerve and staunchness of a Marie Thérèse was still a young person of three-and-twenty.

Meneval, as it seems to us, puts the case not unfairly. The ambition of Napoleon and the policy of the Austrian Cabinet had elevated Marie Louise for a moment to a rank she had not coveted and would gladly have declined. "Be a good wife, a good mother; do everything to please your hus-

band," her father Francis had counselled her. To this, says Meneval, Austrian policy added beneath its breath: "So long as your husband's fortunes prosper, and he is useful to our House." These counsels Marie Louise had submissively and implicitly obeyed. True, she had not succeeded in identifying herself with the country of her adoption. But she had entered France a school-girl, and she quitted it a young and inexperienced woman. The time that she actually passed with Napoleon was two years and eight months.

We are not, of course, to forget her activities, when the crisis came, in sending envoys to her father, and in attempting as far as possible to gain support for the claims of her son. "All of us," says Bourrienne, "would have defended these *si defendi possent.*" Alas! the collapse was complete. Then the domestic autocrat spoke, and once again the obedient daughter listened. The Emperor Francis told his daughter that she must adopt the safest course. Her son's life even was not secure in France, now in large part hostile and turning eagerly to welcome Louis XVIII. Her proper action would be to retire to the Duchy of Parma, one of the Austrian appanages. Up to that moment Marie Louise had hesitated, had moved from Paris to Blois, thence to Orleans, had reverted to Rambouillet. Then she took her final flight, and began those years of residence, placid and uneventful, so far as any great political crises were concerned, in her Duchy.

As for Napoleon himself, we know how he preserved ever for his young consort sentiments of approbation, we might even say of gratitude, for the exactness with which she had performed her appointed part. In all that concerned Marie Louise, Napoleon took to the last a quasi-paternal interest. When in a riding accident she fell into the river Po, he heard of the event with every appearance of solicitude.

In his will, that wondrous "light before death," drawn up in the retreat of the South Atlantic to which he had transported so small a part of his valuable belongings, he stated—

"I have every reason to be pleased with my dear wife, Marie Louise. I retain for her to my last moments the most tender feeling."

A chain of her fair hair was among the relics he bequeathed to his son. He directed, too, that his own hair should be made into a bracelet, clasped with gold, which should be sent to the ex-Empress. Her deposed condition and her title as Grand Duchess of Parma he ignored. "To the Empress Marie Louise, my lace." And he appointed her as his executrix.

M. Masson, in his work *L'Impératrice Marie Louise*, takes the view of a quite dispassionate observer. Admitting that Marie Louise has been for a hundred years "un objet de détestation" in France, he remarks that his countrymen have judged her as if she had been French by birth and blood, or at least as if she were a naturalized

Frenchwoman who had embraced "nos ambitions, nos goûts, nos passions, nos rêves." But Marie Louise was born German, she was brought up in hatred of the country that had temporarily adopted her, and of this country she had acquired scarcely one definite notion. She had spent in all some four years in France—"mais en quelle vie, en quelle captivité, sans rapport avec les êtres, sans tendresse pour le sol et le paysage." She was always in some degree an exile who had been sacrificed to politics; she always felt herself in some degree a stranger. Come we where we may, continues M. Masson, we are still part and parcel of the race that we belong to; and to belong to a race implies that its temperament is ours, "physique, mental et moral." Marie Louise being essentially of her race, her acts, if we would render them intelligible, must be viewed through the prism of her race. Farther, she came into the world an Archduchess, and to France she carried with her something of historic atavism and her imperial education. But the whole national prejudices of the French are against her.

One singular champion Napoleon (in his character of exiled and abandoned husband) found in Vienna. This was the grandmother of Marie Louise, Queen Marie Caroline of Naples. Her Majesty (also at this date a fugitive) was the last of the daughters of Marie Thérèse and a sister of Marie Antoinette. "No longer able," says Meneval, "to endure the authority which the English had arrogated to themselves over Sicily," she had come to Vienna—arriv-

ing, there at about the same time as her granddaughter—to beg for the restitution of her kingdom. She had abhorred the French Revolution and everything that it could and could not be held responsible for, and Napoleon she regarded—not without reason—as her peculiar foe. Now, however, she beheld him destitute, and was touched. History has not informed us of what Queen Marie Caroline said directly to her granddaughter, but the Baron de Meneval has told us what she said to him.

De Meneval, a secretary of Napoleon's, was one of the few French persons who had accompanied the ex-Empress to Vienna. The Queen grandmother sent for him, and gave her opinion of the situation in good set terms. Time was, said her Majesty, when she had had cause enough to cry out against Napoleon, but now that she saw him in his distress she could and did forget the past. It angered her to learn of the efforts the Viennese Court was making to detach her granddaughter from the bonds that had given her glory, and to deprive the Emperor of the sweetest consolation he could receive in this hour of his wounded pride. If the Court still held out against the reunion of husband and wife, it was Marie Louise's duty to tie her sheets to her window and make off in disguise ("il fallait que Marie Louise attachât les draps de son lit à sa fenêtre et s'échappât sous un déguisement").

What a figure would Dumas or our Stevenson have made of the Archduchess and ex-Empress sliding down her rope of knotted sheets! What a

heroine would romantic drama have claimed in all countries! What a dainty page would have been secured to Napoleon's biographers! What a charming little corner would history have kept for Napoleon's Marie Louise!

She reserved herself for a fate less picturesque. In 1814, says Saint-Amand, Marie Louise "had met the man who was to make her forget her duty towards her illustrious husband." This was a middle-aged gallant, General the Count of Neipperg, "as he called himself"; the one-eyed gentleman with the black patch—"one of the most persistent and one of the most skilful of Napoleon's enemies." To Neipperg, after the tragic death on the Rock, Marie Louise was morganatically married. She bore him two daughters and a son, and lived in his subjection till he died in 1829.

Yet another successor, and one not less obscure, did Marie Louise give to the Cæsar of these times. Her third husband, whom she married in 1833, was De Bombelles, a Frenchman in the service of Austria. There seems to have been English blood in De Bombelles, but we have escaped hitherto the reproaches of the French on this score.

Marie Louise died in 1847 (just one year before the Revolution that brought Napoleon's nephew to the front) at the age of fifty-six. Time had not frosted her memories of France—it had done worse: it had changed them again into the hostile fancies of her childhood.

XIII

THE 'TRAGI-COMEDY' OF THE ROCK

Sir Hudson Lowe has hinted that there were gallantries even at St. Helena. Gossip of intrigues no doubt there was, but he makes too much of it. Had he flatly denied it, he would not improbably have been in the right. Napoleon at St. Helena is not, of course, in the dreadful situation of the Masked Man in the keeping of Saint-Mars at Pignerol; but he was held with some degree of closeness by Sir Hudson, the gaoler-in-chief, through whom alone access to the captive could be won. Sir Hudson could name names, he whispers us: well, without enormous indiscretion he might have named them. He does not do so, and the unromancing man seems here to be romancing a little. In circumstances easily imagined it would have been dangerous to leave Napoleon at St. Helena open to the wiles of certain women; but no woman could get to him save by express permission of Lowe himself, and Lowe was a very jealous guardian.

On the whole, and having regard to all the circumstances of the case, a drearier situation than that of the Rock is scarcely to be conceived. Stripped alike of empire and of title, Napoleon, outlawed of Europe, sits down at last to the problem of such a

total failure in life as no other man in the world had ever been confronted with. It is a ruin almost as absolute as that of the "arch enemy" in Milton. Escape? Where, and to what? There is no notion more hopeless. Elba had been successfully evaded; but the return into France from Elba, the return to *power* in France, was far more difficult for Napoleon than we have generally believed—and return from St. Helena there was none. The attempt was never made.

It was in the last week of July 1815 that the British Government decided on St. Helena. On August 7 Napoleon was the prisoner of H.M.S. *Northumberland*. Ninety-five days later, towards eight in the evening of October 17, he was landed with his suite at Jamestown, the capital of the island. Among the twenty-five who followed him, General Bertrand had been comptroller of his household at Elba, Count Montholon and General Gourgaud had served as adjutants in the last campaign, Count de Las Cases was a converted *émigré*, and Dr. Barry O'Meara had held the post of chief surgeon on the *Bellerophon*. Countess Montholon and Mme. Bertrand were the two ladies of the party. After one night at Jamestown, Napoleon moved to "The Briars," the villa residence of the merchant Balcombe (sometimes called Balecombe), where, with Las Cases and a servant or two, he spent six or seven weeks. In December he moved to the house called "Longwood," a secluded dwelling high above the

port, and here the "tragi-comedy of five years" was enacted.

"A little company of French gentlemen and ladies, accustomed to the stirring life of a brilliant capital, found itself pitched on a desolate island, far from friends and home and all the great movement of the world. The attendants of Napoleon were not cast in the stoical mould; and, even if considerations of policy had not been involved, temperament would have inclined them to exaggerate minor discomforts, to strain against the restrictions of the Governor, to shudder at the rocks and ravines, to condemn the rain when it was rainy, the sun when it was sunny, and the wind when it was windy, to compare the sparse gum-trees of the Longwood plateau with the ample shades of Marly and St. Cloud, and the rough accommodation of the Longwood house with the comforts of a well-appointed Parisian hotel. To a man like Napoleon, whose whole soul was in politics, seclusion was a kind of torture. He had no administrative occupations to absorb his energies as had been the case in Elba; and time, to quote his own bitter phrase, was now his only superfluity."

We know precisely what were the instructions of the British Government to Sir Hudson Lowe. "You will observe," it is stated in the dispatch of September 12, 1815, "that the desire of His Majesty's Government is to allow every indulgence to General Bonaparte"—this title was in itself no inconsiderable

grievance—"which may be compatible with the entire security of his person; that he should not by any means escape, or hold communication with any person whatever (excepting through your agency), must be your unremitted care; and these points being made sure, every resource and amusement which may serve to reconcile Bonaparte to his confinement may be permitted."

That his prisoner should be held fast, and be corrupted by no unauthorized communications: these were undoubtedly regarded by Lowe as the cardinal points of his instructions. He has been censured, as we all know, for his manner of enforcing them; but it is probable that if, at an early date, some terms could have been agreed upon between Sir Hudson and the exiles, little would afterwards have been heard on this score. In fact, Napoleon had not more than five or six interviews in all with Sir Hudson Lowe; and at most of these he showed—as was by himself admitted—to very poor advantage. He could not work Lowe up to banging the door! What we need to remember is, that the policy of the little band forbade them to come to terms or live peacefully with the Governor. Lowe's methods were not perfect, but the captives for their part did not choose to be accommodating: it did not suit their scheme. Mr. Seaton says truly that "the whole of their conduct was based on a system, and when that system necessarily came to an end on the death of Napoleon they acknowledged that they had nothing to say against the Governor." Towards the end,

Napoleon, realizing that he must inevitably die upon the Rock, melted somewhat, and on his deathbed "charged Bertrand and Montholon to seek a reconciliation with the Governor." Both of them dined with Lowe immediately after Napoleon's death.

A few lines are worth taking from the interesting *Events of a Military Life*, by Walter Henry, assistant-surgeon of the 66th Regiment, who was at St. Helena from July 1817 until the end:—

"The Governor appeared to me much occupied with the cares and duties of his important and responsible office, and looked very like a person who would not let his prisoner escape if he could help it. From first impressions I entertained an opinion of him far from favourable; if therefore, notwithstanding this prepossession, my testimony should incline to the other side, I can truly state that the change took place from the weight of evidence, and in consequence of what came under my own observation at St. Helena. Since that time he has encountered a storm of obloquy and reproach enough to bow any person to the earth; yet I firmly believe that the talent he exerted in unravelling the intricate plotting constantly going on at Longwood, and the firmness in tearing it to pieces, with the unceasing vigilance he displayed in the discharge of his arduous and invidious duties, made him more enemies than any hastiness of temper, or severity in his measures, of which the world was taught to believe him guilty."

Among the specific commands laid by the Govern-

ment upon Sir Hudson were that Napoleon was always to be styled General Bonaparte (a point that certainly "might have been conceded without loss of dignity" on our part); that no letters or packets were to be sent or received by the French unless they had first been seen by the Governor; that Napoleon himself should be seen by the orderly officer twice in the twenty-four hours, and that sentinels should patrol Longwood after nightfall; finally, "that certain limits should be assigned within which Napoleon should be at liberty to walk or ride unattended." There were to be *some* limits, but they were to be "reasonable." Napoleon had, in fact, a circuit of some twelve miles within which he might walk or ride unattended.

In an existence thus straitly ordered for him there was little room for irregularities on his part, and if quest were made of amorous intrigue it would be quite fruitless. Had any light-behaved lady desired to dispel the gloom of the outlawed Emperor, she would have had to be bold enough to ride up to Longwood under an escort provided by Lowe! Napoleon himself, however, seems to have sought no distractions of the kind. It was difficult to get him abroad from Longwood for any sort of social intercourse. An invitation to meet the Countess of Loudon at dinner was brusquely declined—and no wonder, for it was addressed to "General Bonaparte." As time went on there was little of the gallant in his appearance. He breakfasted once at the house of Sir William Dove (on the other side of

the island), who pronounced him "as fat and as round as a China pig."

The amours of the First Consul and Emperor were not indeed wholly forgotten by Napoleon on the Rock, but there is no craving for new ones. Passion flies St. Helena! The deserted man talked much of his wife, the unresponsive Marie Louise, from whom he could get not so much as a scrap of paper. He talked of and lauded his mother. He talked often and fondly of his son.

He was full of moods, as may be fancied.

"To quicken all the leaden hours was a task too heavy even for his busy genius. He learnt a little English, he dictated memoirs, he played chess, he read books and newspapers, he set Gourgaud mathematical problems, and in the latter half of 1819 and the earlier half of 1820 he found some solace in gardening. In the first two years of his captivity his spirits were sometimes high and even exuberant; and in the exercise of his splendid intellect he must have found some genuine enjoyment. But at heart he was miserable, spiting himself like a cross child, and allowing petty insults to fester within him. Now he was calm, proud, and grand, now irritable and wayward." He could not make the great peace with fate; the world of his enemies was not worth the strife he kept with it (did he not, even when fronting death, leave a legacy to Cantillon for attempting to assassinate Wellington?); and he, the captain of men, had no "captain Christ" to whom at last to yield his soul in resignation.

The most interesting account that has come down to us of the first period at St. Helena is Mrs. Abell's (*Recollections of the Emperor Napoleon at St. Helena*), published about twenty-three years after Napoleon's death. Mrs. Abell was the little Betsy Balcombe whose father was Napoleon's first host on the island. The Briars, Balcombe's estate, a mile and a half out of Jamestown, was long celebrated, says O'Meara, "for the genuine old English hospitality of the proprietor." Napoleon had for his six or seven weeks' residence a small pavilion, twenty yards or so from the dwelling-house, "consisting of one good room on the ground-floor and two garrets." In the lower room, where his camp-bed was set up, he slept, ate, read, and began the dictation of his memoirs. Balcombe fitted up a kitchen for him. So exiguous was the accommodation in the pavilion that the man who had tenanted the Tuileries "good-naturedly walked out after he had finished his dinner, in order to allow his domestics an opportunity of eating theirs in the room which he had just quitted."

Little Betsy Balcombe, who spoke French with fluency, was made a pet of by Napoleon. She was his "Meese Betsee," when he began to trust himself with a word or two of English, and he romped with her, playing blindman's-buff, and running from a cow that he pretended was charging him in a meadow. He chaffed the child and her father about the English habit of sitting over the wine at dinner; Frenchmen, he said, were never so ungallant. It is

from Betsy that we hear of Napoleon's wrestlings with English, over which he stumbled heavily till the end. Chaffing a lady of the suite, he would explain: "This is my lofe, this is my mistress," till the British matron in good Mrs. Balcombe rose in explanation of the objectionable meaning attached by the nineteenth century to this romantic appellation of the Shakespearean age.

From these sweet childish recollections, the naïveté of which seems to visualize the years of Betsy's teens with the crystalline perception of a baby soul, we learn something of the impression made on the sensitive plate of femininity by the chained demon of the island—as to many, by hearsay, and by imagination, he had presented himself. Scarce had the inhabitants of St. Helena heard of Waterloo, when, lo! the vanquished sovereign was in the offing. Vulgar eyes spied on his landing, thoughtless feet pressed on his pathway upwards from the town to the purveyor's cottage. Then did the clear eyes of childhood behold as a man (as one, moreover, who had a genial side, turning to childhood's playfulness) this ogreish vision of the nursery. Hear what little Betsy tells of her own conception. To her, Napoleon had been a monster "with one flaming red eye in the middle of his forehead and long teeth protruding from his mouth, with which he tore to pieces naughty little girls, especially those who did not know their lessons." This dreadful dream resolved itself into a personality struggling with broken English, teasing Betsy, perhaps by hiding her first ball-dress almost

to the hour of dressing, but who, in general, gave to the little companion a kindly patience which stands out against the intolerance of adult opposition. Betsy sings her little songs to the captive, prison linnet that she was. Betsy dares to invade the garden tent wherein Napoleon dictates the memoirs of those wondrous twenty years of lordship. She handles fearlessly that beautiful service of Sèvres china, given to the Emperor by the City of Paris, painted with scenes from his campaigns. He, as we know, regarded these familiarities with the amusement he had often experienced at a masked ball. The child carried away with her, from the island, a lock of Napoleon's hair, a souvenir she had begged of her playmate. "Meese Betsee" had indeed memories for which the hero-worshipping would vainly have bartered gold. The girl stood by when that Frenchwoman, wife of an island official, knelt to kiss the garden turf at The Briars where an "N" had been marked by the faithful courtiers. These things the child, with her child's instinctive delicacy, kept in her little heart.

Some other children, too, come into the picture: little Bertrands, little Montholons, and a young Las Cases, captives like their parents. Some were born on the rock of exile; their advent welcomed by Napoleon as reconciling the caged mother to her doom for one more year. "Faites lui un enfant" was his adjuration to the Comte Bertrand, when the Comtesse sickened in the tropic steam so far from France, or from the Irish land of her ancestry.

When the pretty and vivacious Comtesse Bertrand was confined in the winter of 1817, she brought the newly-born into Napoleon's presence with the words: "Sire, I have the honour to present to your Majesty le premier Français who, since your arrival, has entered Longwood without Lord Bathurst's permission." This child, by the way, was rather curiously named after the Emperors of Austria and Russia and the Duke of Wellington.

Then, as the years dragged on, first one and then another of the little feminine band dropped away. Betsy to England with her parents, when Balcombe had fallen under suspicion of some injudicious, if not nefarious, dealing with the imperial captive, to whom he acted as purveyor; Madame de Montholon, later, to France with much misgiving on the part of the authorities lest she should have carried off the Emperor's memoirs on her person, or packed among her clothing. None left at last, save Madame Bertrand, who had been the most unwilling of them all to make the journey into banishment.

There is, besides the engaging Betsy, one other English girl of whom we catch a moment's glimpse. The French *entourage*, who promptly christened her the Nymph, had observed the young lady one day in her rustic chasm, and reported on the incident to Napoleon. He, by and by, set out on horseback for a peep at the fair islander; but she, it seems, had somehow got wind of the design, and donned the outfit of the Philistine. The spell was thereby broken. The girl's relatives, too, felt uneasy at the

notice accorded by the prisoner-of-war. The attentions of an ex-Emperor of whom tales, not underspiced we may believe, had reached their isolation were open to suspicion. Napoleon himself perceived or heard of their timidities; he was in no way inclined to give occasion to the enemy (it was in any case a matter of small interest), and he sought the Nymph no more.

Report was put about that the youthful and pretty Miss Susanna Johnson, Lady Lowe's daughter by her first husband, had "ventured to come alone to Longwood," where, meeting the ex-Emperor, she received a rose from his hand. A step-daughter of the Governor would scarcely have taken so risky a jaunt, and Miss Johnson's half-sister, Miss Lowe, declared the story "a pure invention; such a thing was impossible."

Between the rare forms of womanhood seen at St. Helena, so remote from the world that had shaped itself trembling beneath Napoleon's hand, and those women—whether of the Tuileries, of the *coulisses*, or of foreign courts—among whom the dictator had reigned, what contrasts may the fancy make! Napoleon himself, if the contrasts were ever made by him, was doubtless very little moved. Already the vulture gnawed: the malignant disorder of the body joined with the lessened vigour of the mind (for he had lived a thousand lives in one, and Nature strikes at last) conspired to draw on the apathy of age forestalled: already there had fallen a shadow of the silent shores of death. The immense cerebration

was being reduced to the flywheel operation of trivialities, of the everlasting hysterics of the younger members of the suite. The exasperated nerves took outlet in petulance, the conqueror skulked behind the shutters of dismal Longwood, behind the curtains of the bed, shrinking like the stricken beast from the pertinacious efforts of officialism to set an eye upon him, to certify that he was still within the prison.

Anon, pleased as a child with a new toy, the conqueror sat at the chess-board, rendered careless in his play by admiration of the beautiful Chinese chessmen. They were sent by a member of the Elphinstone family who had touched at the island on his way home from the Celestial Empire to England : an offering in recollection of a cup of cold water, for Napoleon on the field of Waterloo had sent drink from his own canteen to another member of the family wounded in that "Valley of Decision." A sister of the family, Lady Malcolm, has recorded (*A Diary of St. Helena*), like little Betsy, her surprise at the real Napoleon of the captivity. The embodiment of all evil in one countenance, which she had awaited, ended in a face not expressive to her judgment of any immense capacity, but with the aspect of benevolence.

This feeling of surprise was common to many of the visitors to the island who were for the first time confronted with the bogey-man of rumour. Little Betsy's notion was perhaps more comically materialized; it was hardly more grotesque. We hear of the

young Scotswoman, Mrs. Stewart, who visited St. Helena on her way home from India, and with whom Napoleon discussed his favourite Ossian. "How entirely different from what we fancied him to be!" was her exclamation. This man, who had made—as all the world was then saying—a shambles of Europe, what could he be but a ghoul! How indeed were any of them to understand that the Napoleon of their imagination should in a day of utter weariness find rest in laying down the mask and unbending to these small variants of the island solitude?

On the constant petty troubles within the walls of Longwood we need dwell but little longer. These bickerings, jealousies, and squabbles were not so much between the two women—Mme. de Montholon and Mme. Bertrand—who shared the Emperor's fate, as among the younger menkind of the small establishment. Napoleon bore with surprising self-control many of the disagreeables entailed by the conditions of life in that narrow spot. Then upon occasion, goaded beyond endurance, he would rap out a reminder to the foolish children—what indeed were their misfortunes, what indeed the contrasts of their present to their past, as compared with his own?

The gentle Comtesse de Montholon, ever for making the best of an unhappy situation, set herself against all quarrelling; and she, though not remaining to the end of his expiation on the Rock, did more perhaps than Bertrand's wife to soothe the closing years and months of Napoleon's exile, of his

physical torment, when the malignant gastric ulceration sent him in anguish to the floor. For five years she bore her part in the tragi-comedy, a gentle companion and guest at Napoleon's table; and to her, as to the Bertrands, children were born. She did not quite escape calumny. We hear that Madame Bertrand, her Celtic nature fired with jealousy, at some real or imagined preference of Napoleon for the French Comtesse, cast it in her teeth that she had shared the Emperor's room. M. Philippe Gounard has dealt with this painful subject, arguing its *invraisemblance;* there is a good deal of ungenerous and rather scurrilous writing on this subject, but not an ounce of proof against Mme. de Montholon. The de Montholons were favoured by Napoleon at St. Helena, and both of them were in his confidence; but, were there a suspicion of truth in the statements about Mme. de Montholon, the husband's reputation would suffer even worse things than the wife's, for he knew her every movement, and there is not a trace of the pander in his affection for and devotion to the Emperor. Napoleon openly regretted to Montholon the departure of Mme. de Montholon from St. Helena, and Montholon wrote to her of this with pride. "The Emperor very much regrets your departure. His tears flowed for you, perhaps for the first time in his life." So far is this case from being proved, that any argument would *dis*prove it.

When death struck off the shackles, Mme. Bertrand alone of the little feminine band looked upon

the quiet face "before decay's effacing fingers" had swept from it the heroic lineaments. She looked down from her tall height, for she was nearly six feet, she the handsomest woman seen in St. Helena, says the chronicler Betsy, recalling her childish admiration for the new-comer. She, who had been the most reluctant of the little company of exiles, was to be the only woman fated to stand before the lifeless hero.

We see Mme. Bertrand, first of all, in her girlhood, as Miss Frances Dillon. Her father was an Irishman who had thrown in his cause with Royalist France, and whose head had fallen in the Terror. The Lady Jerningham of the day was her aunt. Fanny Dillon must have towered above Bonaparte as she danced the "Boulangère," a country-dance, with him in the camp at Boulogne.

Some betrothal had occurred in her early girlhood —then she married Bertrand the faithful Maréchal. With him she shared Napoleon's stay at Elba.

The decision that Bertrand should be one of the ex-Emperor's suite at St. Helena drove Madame Bertrand almost to despair. We are told that she attempted suicide while on the *Bellerophon*. Her attempt at drowning failed, and she spent the last five years and a half with Napoleon. Between Mme. Bertrand and Napoleon, as time went on, there was considerable friction. Even upon Bertrand himself the fret of the long imprisonment told before the end. He would have been glad to get away and attend to the education of his children. For Madame

Bertrand, even if she did prove fretful and petulant, we can find a great deal of pity and excuse. She did not at any time share her husband's devotion to the captive, and, prisoned as she was in a tropical region, the complications of maternity tried the unhappy woman's health. The Duchesse d'Abrantès praises her as one of those "*qui ont adouci l'agonie de l'Empereur*," but there was little warmth in her attentions.

If, for any dealings with the Sex, Napoleon deserved chastisement at the hand of Fate, he perhaps received it in the absence from his dying hours of one single loving woman.

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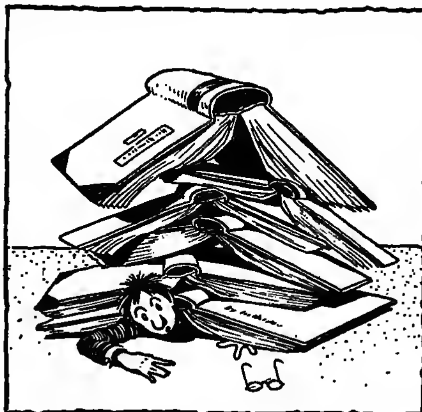

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